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The New Order of the Old

Atheism in a Post-Secular Age

By:

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in
sociology

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Declaration

The work presented in this thesis has been produced solely by the author under the supervision of his thesis supervisors. The material in this thesis is submitted for a degree to the University of Warwick only and has not been submitted to another university.

Abstract

The religion versus modernity dichotomy has become a platitude which is taken for granted by many researchers in the field of sociology of modernity. The dichotomy is the theoretical foundation of many violent ideologies, both religious and atheist. This thesis challenges the dichotomy and its variants – such as reason versus faith or ‘the sacred’ versus ‘the secular’ – as the results of the misreading of the history of the constitution of modernity. Modernity is historically shaped by and structurally intertwined with theology and sociologists’ need to reveal those theological forgotten roots and hidden structures. This is the first goal of the thesis which begins with the search for the theological roots of modern atheisms. Showing the theological unconscious of the modern atheist discourses will let us to see two sides of modern Prometheanism: The first side, which is well-known, is about the rebellion against the transcendental and considering the transcendental as the projection of the human mind into the sky. The point is that there can never be an overwhelming consensus about either this Promethean description of the origins of religion or another description of man being the projection of God on earth. We, nevertheless, are living in a society which contains both of those options and a lot more alternative possibilities in between. So, while we cannot reach an overlapping consensus about the principles, we can pragmatically engage in the process of self-formation through co-practice. The argument is that the desire of self-formation, self-creation and self-actualisation is the second side of Prometheanism which will prepare us with a framework for co-practice.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them.

The Book of Genesis

What is the life of man, an image of the Godhead.

Friedrich Hölderlin

Two Millennia together and not a single new God. And how many new gods
are still possible.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The “new” often consists not in the invention of new categories or new
figures of thought, but rather in a surprising employment of existing ones.

Amos Funkenstein

*To my beloved parents
Maryam Mansouri and
Seyed Mohammad Hassan Hashemi Madani*

Introduction

The background line of reasoning of this thesis is a pragmatist one that adheres to the suggestion that there is no *a priori* principle which can guide our actions all the way from the beginning to end. Principles instead appear through the process of practice. Yet, those newly emerged principles are hardly created *ex nihilo*. They are the revised versions and re-written forms of the already existed formulas.

One might choose several strategies to show the centrality of practice. For instance, one can, following Rorty, argue for the lack of such *a priori* and universally true principles or alternatively, dispute the existence of a truth-tracking faculty inside all human beings (Rorty, 1982). Another strategy, following Bernstein, could be to show the creativeness of praxis (Bernstein, 1972; 2010). Yet, another intellectual strategy would be to argue for the historicity of the current options of belief and unbelief. Taylor and Joas adopted the last way and I would like to define my thesis in this line as well (Taylor, 2007; Joas, 2014). I accordingly would limit my research to deal with only one of the current options which is atheism. I want to put forward a hypothesis that a discourse shift is happening in modern atheism which contains positive implications that goes beyond modern unbelief. That is, the emergence of a new form of atheism which (unlike Charles Taylor's suggestion) does not define itself as a form of

overcoming religion and challenging the idea of God. It rather would challenge the very dichotomy of believer versus unbeliever and replace it with an analytically different dichotomy, of trained versus untrained. In extending the argument for the second dichotomy, Peter Sloterdijk's suggestion was to utilise *anthropotechnics*, which were nourished in a religious context for several centuries, and not to merely reject them under the category of a critique of religion.

In other words, this thesis adopts a twofold mission of showing the historicity of modern atheism and also the new possibilities which have emerged as a result of the stated shift in discourse. So, I will put all forms of modern atheism under the category of modern Prometheanism. That is, a theologically motivated process of the attribution of the powers of a Christian God to human beings. That was a process of gradually denying the existence of a creator and at the same time emphasising the creative powers of human beings. Prometheanism, arguably, contains two aspects. The first aspect is the well-known *rebellion against God*. That is rejecting God's existence and accordingly the truth-fullness of religious claims. The second less acknowledged aspect, though, is *the idea of self-creation through mimicking God*. Thus, Prometheanism is not all about the negative task of unmasking religion but also the positive task of self-formation, self-creation, and training.

The point is that the most recent aspect of Prometheanism, the importance of which increasingly appears in the works of particularly continental philosophers (such as Vattimo, Žižek, Sloterdijk etc.), can serve as a platform of co-practice of both believers and non-believers.

The public sphere cannot be totally occupied with varieties of truth-claims from either side without any serious dialogue and overlapping consensus. The pragmatist suggestion would be that consensus is not the result of a mere quarrel between different arguments and truth-claims. Rather, it needs to be created as a result of co-practice in a common battlefield. So, one cannot expect any lasting solution to be found as a result of a dialogue which is limited to the very intellectual side of different belief systems. The fact is that the acts of social agents are not solely (or even primarily) constituted as a result of a belief in a set of doctrines. So even if we are able to find an interesting intellectual solution to the disagreements, it is unlikely that they are going to be effective in real life unless they are accompanied with practice. One instead can expect that entering the public sphere merely with a truth-claim will only cause the deepening of the existing divisions. Alternatively, however, solutions might be created as a result of co-practice in a common struggle and in a shared battlefield (Žižek, 2012). One cannot anticipate the final form and shape of the solution because they cannot be foreseen through a universally valid principle. So the other option would be to focus on co-practice not merely on unmasking the claims of the others.

So, the suggestion is that the task of unmasking which is not followed by a subsequent proposal for a co-practice would be unfinished. In a way, and according to Sloterdijk who is central to this thesis, this was an original mistake of the founders of the Enlightenment. So, an over-emphasis on the unmasking religious claims and revealing the errors of the religious people who hijacked the creative process of dialogue

created an antagonised environment. The parallel strategy of the Enlighteners was to envisage an ideal sphere of neutrality which would let all the sides express their viewpoints with freedom. The secular (as a modern epistemic category) was going to represent that neutrality (Calhoun, 2012; Milbank, 2013). Thus, one could imagine that religions and ideologies are filled with dogmas and irrational beliefs, so it would be impossible to find any overlapping consensus through a mere dialogue of religions. The secular would supposedly present us a neutral sphere of dialogue which is based on reason and rationality. This, in fact, was a clever suggestion, and against which is difficult to argue. In the last part of the thesis, I will define post-secularism as the embodiment of the hesitation about the possibility of that alleged neutrality. Thus, post-secularism, for philosophers such as Taylor, can be considered as a critique of 'subtraction stories'. Those are the secular stories which assume that 'religious illusions' are there to distort reality. Thus when we get rid of them, we will be able to see 'reality' as such. The main way to challenge these subtraction stories is by showing the historical construction of the idea of *the secular as the neutral*. The ideas of neutrality and secularity have been historically constituted as responses to particular political necessities after the Confessional Wars. Nowadays, secularity can also emerge in a plurality of social versions in different countries. For example, the secular as the neutral in France means the ban of religious appearance in the public while in India it is translated as the equal subsidising of all religions by the government. Thus, ironically,

the secular as the neutral is also subject to interpretations (Calhoun, 2012: p. 337).

On the believers' side, there was a subsequent strategic tool which connected the loss of faith to the decline of morality. That is, a 'reverse subtraction story' which claims that a society without religious teachings will necessarily be a less moral society. As Joas argued, this is also a myth-in-trouble. In fact, sociological studies do not show any meaningful difference between religious and irreligious societies in terms of their commitment to morality (Zuckerman, 2008; Joas, 2014). Yet, this strategic tool at the hands of the believers is another barrier for co-practice in a society which increasingly hosts varieties of belief and unbelief options.

In the first part of the thesis, I will try to 'unmask' the theological unconscious of modern forms of atheism. However, this is not done simply as a favour to the religious side, but as an attempt to make two points: firstly, to illustrate the historicity of atheism and challenging the subtraction stories which pretend that atheism is not a mere belief system along with others, but that it is the 'logical' result of overcoming long-standing illusions. The critique of neutrality-claims and other self-congratulatory subtraction stories is for the benefit of 'unbelief' as well. It will let the non-believers enter into a meaningful dialogue without the assistance of the authority of an imagined neutrality (Taylor, 2010: p. 406). Secondly, it will help us to appreciate the more interesting and productive side of modern Prometheanism which is an invitation to self-formation. My core argument is this: the Promethean demand of self-

formation presupposes a conception of human flourishing which is detached from transcendental beings (what Charles Taylor called 'a closed reading of the immanent frame'). But since it contains co-practice, co-working and co-training, it can easily be stretched to include believers. So the co-practice of believers and non-believers which will lead to new possibilities and unforeseeable horizons is emerging inside modern Prometheanism. In a way, I am welcoming the emergence of what I will call 'tourist atheism' and I assume that its underlying idea of self-creation can work as a common ground for co-practice.

Positing modernity and religion as incompatible has become a platitude amongst the sociology textbook writers. For a long time the standard definition of modernity has been progress from the religious past towards a secular future without religion as a determining factor. Historically, this dichotomy has been devised as a conceptual tool for establishing modernity's self-definition and its alleged autonomy. Even many religious people accepted that opposition as the true reading of the history of modernity. However, recently, following sociological hesitations about the old versions of the secularisation theories, it has been shown that the foregoing distinction is a false duality. Religion has survived to modern times and as one of the most important forces has always made contributions to societies. Even more notably, recently the social sciences have experienced a *gestalt-switch*, or as Peter Berger called it an '*aha!* experience,' which tells us that: "the world today, with some exceptions [...] is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever" (Berger, 1999: p. 2). This constitutes one of the earliest steps

toward challenging the above-mentioned platitude. The second step, it can be argued, has been taken outside the social sciences, and mostly in the departments of theology and history of science. This latter step concerns types of theories which not only considers the *survival* of religion in the modern age, but also recognises the *constitutive role* of religion. That is to say, modernity itself has emerged in the first place as the by-product of some theological shifts within Christianity of the Middle Ages'. The fundamental argument of these series of theories about the structural dependence of modernity on religion has caused a shift in the modernity studies of our time. When John Milbank, Michael Allen Gillespie and Brad Gregory talk about the theological 'roots' of modernity, they do not only mean the 'historical origins', but also a kind of 'structural affinity'. After this second *aha!* experience every year an increasing number of researchers scrutinise the aspects of this dependence (see: Funkenstein, 1989; Milbank, 2006; Brague, 2007; Gillespie, 2008; Fuller, 2011; Gregory, 2012). This thesis is a contribution to those theories, with the goal of extending that wave to the social sciences. One of the motivations behind this project is to show that religion and modernity are inextricably intertwined; thus the dichotomy of 'reason based modernity' versus 'faith based religion' is not valid any more. Arguably, this will cause a vast reformulation of our current understanding of the modern.

I need to define the concept of *atheism* from the outset. The meaning of this concept is not as clear and transparent as is often assumed. In fact, historically speaking, calling oneself an 'atheist' with a positive connotation is a very recent phenomenon. In premodern times,

atheism was normally a kind of accusation used to discredit someone. For instance, in ancient Greece Socrates was accused of corrupting the minds of youth with his atheism – an accusation rejected by Socrates. Strangely enough, some of the first Christian apologists were also accused of being atheists by pagans. Justine Martyr (100-165 AD) was one such example, and in response he approved of the accusation by saying that “we are [atheists] in relation to what you consider gods, but are most certainly not in relation to the Most True God” (qtd. in McGrath, 2004: p. 8). In addition, at the end of Middle Ages, Viret – a close colleague of Calvin – used to refer to deists of his age as atheists (Betts, 1984, p. 6). There is a common link between all these cases: Socrates, the first fathers of Christianity, and deists used not to worship the publicly accepted deities. That is to say, they were reforming or denying the official religion of society but only replacing it with a new sort of deity. So, the term ‘atheism’ had a negative connotation. It meant that one does not conform to socially accepted religious rules, whether there is a place for God in his or her new heretical belief system or not. Atheism with its new, positive connotation was first used during the eighteenth century by figures such as David Hume (1711-1776). But it attained public attention after the debates between theologians and scientists following the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859). The theory of evolution was not coherent with the literal reading of some parts of the bible, specifically in the case of the age of the earth. That conflict deepened as a result of the efforts of some textbook writers who tried to

project the conflict between science and religion on to the whole of pre-Darwinian history (Armstrong, 2009: p. 259).

In recent decades, scientifically motivated atheism has been revived in the works of so-called New Atheists that includes four writers: Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens. These hard-line defenders of atheism, and writers of some of the best-selling books in recent decades, have tried to publicise the idea of atheism as a modern, scientifically supported ideology which is not only true but has an inherent mission to show the falsity of religious points of view. They have mostly based their arguments on Darwinism: Dennett, famously, called evolutionary theory a 'universal acid' which ultimately erodes all superstitious and religious beliefs (Dennett, 1995). The popularity of New Atheism heightened after 9/11, becoming a type of zeitgeist resulting from the renewed interest in religion and its effects on modern society. This zeitgeist has largely subsided in the past few years and subsequently the popularity of New Atheists has declined. The first claim of this study is that a new type of atheism has recently emerged which is totally different from New Atheism. Accordingly, in the second chapter, following Bauman's division, I will define two types of modern atheisms: *pilgrim atheism* and *tourist atheism*. With the pilgrim metaphor, I mean that the New Atheists' type of atheism is about the clear-cut boundaries between science and religion, reason and revelation and truth and falsehood; this is similar to a pilgrimage which is about a journey from the land of darkness toward the realm of light. That is to say, pilgrimage is always about a certain true goal and definite methods of

reaching it through some specific rituals. The tourism metaphor, conversely, is about searching for internal pleasure. So, unlike the pilgrim's obsession with one certain destination, a tourist can have fun in several places and none of them is considered to be an 'authentic' destination. Thus, it is a way of playing with different narratives of 'truth', not a journey to find *the truth*. Accordingly, tourist atheism has two major figures which otherwise have nothing in common: the German philosopher, Peter Sloterdijk and the Slovenian leftist philosopher, Slavoj Žižek.¹ One might dare to include the popular writer of this new type of atheism, Alain de Botton, specifically referring to his best seller *Religion for Atheists* (2012). The common point between these thinkers and writers is a sort of deconstruction of religion, and approaching it not as superstition but as part of our cultural heritage. Thus, even an atheist can be religious in terms of taking advantage of religion. Correspondingly, Žižek published a manifesto of his attempts to establish an 'atheist theology' (Žižek, 2009) and Sloterdijk, controversially, asserted that religions have never existed. What do exist are only "misinterpreted anthropotechnic practice systems" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 84). de Botton, for his part, talked about a project called 'atheism 2.0' which tries to borrow a secular version of some rituals and sentiments from religions for the sake of an atheistic well-being. *Ipsa facto*, we might wonder whether a transition is taking place from the paradigm of pilgrim atheism to the paradigm of tourist atheism. What is certain now is that the tourist atheist movement has been emerging since the beginning of the second decade

¹ I write about Sloterdijk in chapter six along with Hans Blumenberg (who can also be cautiously added to this group). The discussion concerning Žižek's point of view is in chapter eight.

of the twenty-first century. I will explain the details of tourist atheists' projects in the third part of this research. All in all, to clarify my usage of this term, and to limit the scope of the study, in this research when we are talking about *modern atheisms* we mean these two contemporary types of pilgrim and tourist atheisms in the West.

After this conceptual clarification, let us return to the aforementioned 'unsettling question' about the theological roots of modern atheisms. The second claim of this study is that modern atheisms are rooted in some Christian theological doctrines that used to consider man as a being that was created in the image and likeness of God. There is a verse in the Book of Genesis which says: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created him" (1:27). In terms of the historical consequences of its interpretations, this is probably the most significant verse in the whole of the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions. The story of the evolution of interpretations of this verse starts with Saint Augustine (354-430) who found the divine element of human beings crucial to man's integrity while approaching different inner temptations and external forces. This doctrine, which has been known as the *imago dei* doctrine, became one of the most significant Christian doctrines in terms of defining the relationship between God and man. In the scholastic tradition, too, this doctrine was at the centre of the discussion between the Middle Age philosophers. Arguably, the most revolutionary interpretation of this doctrine belongs to Duns Scotus, one of the leading figures of the nominalist movement in the fourteenth century. Scotus and his followers interpreted this doctrine univocally. That means they

considered it not analogically but literally – i.e. they believed that humankind had been created in the image of God and thus God's attributes also applied to people. In this understanding, for example, if God is powerful, it means that we, God-like creatures, are also powerful in the same sense. The only difference is that His power is unlimited whereas our power is restricted to the borders of our body, place, time and so on. The founding fathers of 'the scientific revolution' also believed in this doctrine – specifically, Newton. They have interpreted this doctrine in a new way. That is to say, if we are created in the image of God, this means that there is an existential overlap between the divine mind and the human mind. This was a kind of theological precedence for Kant's concept of *a priori* knowledge as a potentiality of grasping the basic features of reality (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: p. 47). In any case, historians and philosophers of science have shown how this kind of conception of the existential overlap between God and man has constituted the modern scientific ethos, and through that the modern world (Funkenstein, 1989; Gillespie, 2008; Fuller, 2007, 2010 and 2011). I employ the fundamental thesis of these intellectual projects by searching for such a foundation for the modern pilgrim and tourist atheisms. I will argue that the two aforementioned types of modern atheisms are extensions of two Scotist doctrines: respectively, the doctrine of the primacy of the will and the doctrine of haecceitas (*haecceity* or individuation). On the one hand, according to the first doctrine we are created in the image and likeness of God in terms of gaining God-like *objective* knowledge. On the other hand, haecceitas is about being

created in the image of God by being an autonomous individual like Him. So when we apply our individual rights and follow our egoistic wishes we reproduce God's main feature of *singularity* (or *subjectivity*). Thus, there are two ways of playing God: the pilgrim way of reproducing God's objective knowledge and the tourist way of mimicking God's singularity.

We can put both these versions of atheism under the category of 'Prometheanism' – the modern atheistic conception of God as the by-product of man's psyche or society. That is to say, it is not God that created man, but conversely, man has created God. Viewed in that light, Prometheanism is the common premise of modern atheisms from Feuerbach and Marx to Dawkins and de Botton. It is necessary to justify Prometheus as a suitable metaphor for modern atheisms, but before doing so, we need to recall that metaphors, by nature, involve the descriptions of one thing in terms of something else. Particularly, today scientists use metaphors to simplify scientific ideas for non-scientists. For example, describing DNA as a 'map' gives a visible and positive face to an otherwise nucleic acid which is just a part of all living organisms. Using metaphor, scientists can direct the public's attention towards a 'map' that tell us a lot about life. But the downside of using metaphors is that, as mere contracts or artefacts, they necessarily conceal parts of reality (Evenden, 2014: p. 37). The same is true for the 'Prometheus metaphor' which brings a number of positive and negative meanings to mind. Thus, we need to make clear the limited meaning of this metaphor as it will be used in this study. For us, *Prometheus the fire thief* is the symbol of both rage against God for the sake of providing human beings with material

(however purposeless) progress and the demand of self-creation through mimicking God. Probably the best description of this type of reading of the myth is in Goethe's short poem *Prometheus* (1785) in which was mixed the pagan and Christian definitions of God. Thus, one can replace Zeus with God and Prometheus with a damned angel (not only another Titan). In the poem Prometheus as a rebellious angel subjected Zeus to a monologue on his hatred of the divine. The poem ends: "Here I sit, forming humans, in my image; a people to be like me, to suffer, to weep, to enjoy and to delight themselves, and to not attend to you -- as I". This clearly exemplifies what we mean by the goal of modern atheisms: the intentional hostility towards, and detachment from, the divine for the sake of making earthly progress. This is probably different from the way Mary Shelley (1797-1851) used the Prometheus metaphor and is closer to the traditionalists' usage of the term. Hossein Nasr, the famous traditionalist, placed *the pontifical man* against *the Promethean man*. Considering man as the pontiff or the bridge between heaven and earth is the traditional religious view of man as *khalifatallah* or 'the representative of God on earth' to use the Islamic term. Therefore, the "Pontifical man is aware of his role as intermediary between Heaven and earth" (Nasr, 1989: p. 145), while the Promethean man rejects that role and seeks independence from the divine. This paradox of the rejection of, and simultaneously, dependence on the divine is the element that I have abstracted from the myth of Prometheus.

Before going through the details of the abovementioned discussions, we need to respond clearly to one of the common

accusations concerning the type of theories in question – known as the *genetic fallacy* accusation. The simple form of this accusation is as follows: even if religion historically constituted modernity, this does not mean that it is still theoretically relevant. In responding to this we need to remember that the genetic fallacy states that “the origins do not necessarily determine the current state”. One common mistake is to read “not necessarily” as “necessarily not”. In other words, our claim is that the theological roots of modernity are still theoretically relevant. But the fallacy is a formal, logical point which indicatively neither rejects (nor approves) that claim. Thus, to reject a claim which has been based on the historico-sociological facts, we need the counter historico-sociological facts, not a formal, logical point. Moreover, the claim of this study is not that the modern world is religious but that religion and modernity – either analytically or historically – are not necessarily contradictory.

Finally, I need to review briefly the structure of the thesis. This thesis contains three parts and ten chapters. I will start with the theoretical framework of the research in part one. In chapter one, a historical narrative of the emergence of modern Prometheanism will be reviewed, and in chapter two, I will explain the division between pilgrim and tourist atheisms. Following that, a pincer movement strategy is required to go through the details about these two types of atheisms. Thus, the basic question which is going to be addressed in the second part: how atheists interpreted religion. Lastly, the final part of the thesis is dedicated to the idea of going beyond Prometheanism through co-practice. There I will put forward a synthesis of two theses; one by

Sloterdijk in his ground-breaking *You Must Change Your Life* (2013) and the other by Rorty in his classic essay; *The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy* (2008). I will call the synthesis *the primacy of training over truth* which summarises the core argument of this thesis: one does not need to go to the public sphere, merely with his or her truth-claims. We can pragmatically give priority to creative co-practice in a common struggle to be able to cope with crises of the modern age.

Part One

Prometheanism

Prometheanism is a neologism for the modern atheistic conception of the relationship between man and God. According to this conception, God is created by man. This is the inversion of the theistic conception of the relationship between man and God. In the first chapter of part one, through a historical survey I will show that modern atheisms are products of a significant paradigm-shift at the end of the Middle Ages' scholasticism: the shift from Thomism to Scotism. Reviewing the evolution of the Promethean man, I will focus on three historical turning points from the fourteenth century to today. Three figures represent those turning points which are respectively Duns Scotus, René Descartes and Ludwig Feuerbach. In the second chapter, I will put forward a typology of modern atheisms – pilgrim atheism versus tourist atheism – which I think is more comprehensive than the other typologies. Finally in chapter three, I will argue that the modern Promethean unbelief, contains two sides; *rebellion* against the transcendental and *self-creation* through mimicking the transcendental. However one might tend to reject the rebellion side of Prometheanism but he or she could be agreeing with the analytically different self-creation side. Moreover, this recognition and acceptance could open up a space for co-practice of believers and nonbelievers.

Chapter One

Scotist Mentality and Promethean Modernity

1. Introduction

This chapter describes a theologically rooted image of the world which was constituted during the late Middle Ages. That revolutionary image, which inverted scholasticism, altered the traditional conception of the relationship between man and God and gave birth to the modern Promethean man. This type of man evolved along with the advancement of modernity. The last chain in the evolution of the Prometheanism, in our time, is modern atheism. So, first, in this chapter, we need to clarify what is intended by the term 'Promethean man', and then we can delve into the notion of modern atheism in the next chapter. My focus will be on the changing images of the relationship between man and God in the history of Christianity from the age of Jesus to our time. Since the intention of this research is not a wide historical survey, I chose three main turning points in that process; Duns Scotus, René Descartes and Ludwig Feuerbach are the main figures of these three phases respectively.

The fundamental argument of this chapter is that some characteristics of the Christian God during the late Middle Ages were attributed to man. This transmission of God's properties to man found its substantial inception in the nominalist narrative with figures like Duns

Scotus (1265-1308) and William of Ockham (1287-1347). That narrative in fact has sowed the very seeds of the modern Promethean man. Modern atheism was the extreme point of that spectrum in which (as Feuerbach stated) man became the creator of God. That is, the *creation* became the *creator*. The basic question of this chapter, thus, will be: how did God become the debtor of man? Or, to put it in our terms: how has this Promethean image of man been constituted?

2. Three stages of the evolution of modern Promethean man

The modern Western Promethean man has been shaped in three main stages. Those three levels indicate changing modes of relationship between God and man. In the first stage, the relationship between God and man, which was considered an equivocal bond in the Thomistic narration, transformed into the univocal one. In the same vein man became a godlike creation who is totally different from the transcendental God but in degree not in kind. In the second stage, God became detached from the world; he was still the creator but he was not a constant intervener in the destiny of man. This level was started by René Descartes' famous *cogito*. By this statement, Descartes founded faith in God not on His grace but on man's *autonomous subject*. The Enlightenment idea of 'God the *clockmaker*' also appeared in this level. But the peak of this stage was the establishment of 'deism' during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The idea of inner-worldly progress emerged in this level as a secular version of the Christian doctrine of providence. Finally, the last stage was started by Ludwig Feuerbach's assertion about God. He believed that God is the product of the projection

of man's mind into the sky. This was an end to the relationship between man and God through the elimination of one side, and was also the beginning of modern atheism with the specific characteristic of conceiving of God as the creation of man. In the next chapter I will deal with two types of recent modern atheisms and how they are constituted. But for now, the emergence of the modern Promethean man in its theological context will be the subject of the present chapter.

3. Modern man: tormented God or godlike creature?

Jesus Christ was a hybrid entity. He was considered to be 'the Son of God' and 'the Son of Man' at the same time. That was an unprecedented place that he shared with no other prophet. A hybrid entity like Christ could be tortured and crucified. But still his soul was a Godly one. Christ's physical pains (like the pains of the Jews in their miserable situation after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 66 AD) were real. But, nonetheless, one could keep hoping by trusting in the God side of the soul. This side caused relief for Jesus through resurrection and eternal salvation. In him, thus, God and man were united in one body at least once. Then 'Jesus' became 'Christ'. In Christ, the transcendental God simultaneously became immanent. Or, God became the 'absolute fragile' (Žižek, 2000). That is the absolute and infinite God incarnated in a body which is fragile in terms of its finite nature. This inconsistent combination did not remain limited to the figure of Christ. The Christian belief that man, as the high-grade creature, is created *in the image and likeness of God* was the basis of the *imago dei* doctrine which was first used by Augustine (MacIntyre, 2009: p. 26). But it found a central locus in

the fourteenth century nominalist tradition (Fuller, 2011: p. 79; Funkenstein, 1986). With the mediation of some late Middle Ages scholastic narrations, thus, a hybrid definition of Christ expanded to humanity as a whole. Man was assumed to be an animal with the potentiality to possess godlike powers. Those theological narrations (about which I will write in the next sections) constituted the metaphysical framework for the emergence of modern humanity and modern Prometheus.

3-1. The nominalist poetic revolution and the metaphysical framework of modern humanity

The nominalist foundation of the modern conception of humanity has been, recently, the centre of many discussions. In his *Humanity 2.0* (2011), Fuller puts forward a theory that he has named the theory of *mendicant modernities* – which is of help to our discussion about the metaphysical framework of the emergence of modern man. The central insight of the theory is that humanity in the West has been the site of a ‘bipolar disorder’. That is, humanity has been a changing concept which was, from time to time, moving on the continuum of being. Two extreme poles of that continuum are God and animal. This remark attests to the point at issue: “Western theology poses the question of humanity in terms of whether we are more like gods or apes” (Fuller, 2011: p. 78). The starting point of this continuum is, as I wrote above, the very hybrid nature of Christ. But this dichotomy found its own counterpart institutions during Middle Ages by the emergence of two Christian mendicant orders,

Dominicans and Franciscans, who are respectively behind the establishment of the two universities of Paris and Oxford.

Indeed, the differences between the university's founding Christian orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, have redounded through the centuries, resulting in what I call alternative 'mendicant modernities': on the one hand our reabsorption into nature and on the other our transcendence of nature. (Fuller, 2011: p. 69)

The Dominican version of Catholicism, on the one hand, continued through Vico, the Scottish Enlightenment and "various ontological pluralists of the modern era" such as neo-Kantians.² On the other hand, the nominalist view was a fourteenth and fifteenth century intellectual movement which was mostly the continuation of the Franciscan line. It also passed through the fathers of the Reformation, Descartes, the rationalist³ and the positivists (Fuller, 2011: p. 95). The founding fathers of the Scientific Revolution were also inspired by the Scotist version of the *imago dei* doctrine. This version of the doctrine was paving the way for man to acquire perfection and move toward divinity. Thus, the departure of man is from the ape side of the continuum of being, headed toward that divine side. This idea "suggested that our rational faculties were divinely inspired and capable of indefinite expansion" (Fuller, 2011:

² John Milbank argued that one cannot put Kant on the Dominican side. Milbank's argument emphasises the Kantian rejection of any kind of kinship between the visible and the invisible. So the Kantian noumenon/phenomenon distinction stands against Thomistic doctrines of analogy and participation and puts Kant on the Scotist line (cf. Milbank, 2000: pp. 38-40).

³ Rationalists were those who believed in the ability of human reason to discover the natural laws. They also tried to deduce positive laws by a mathematical methodology from a few concepts (Waddicor, 1970: p. 45).

p. 81). In this way the 'achievable perfection' became the theological foundation of the modern idea of progress (Löwith, 1949: chapter 4; Funkenstein, 1986: chapter 4). Modernity in general also originated from this kind of conception of human perfection. Modernity is an unprecedented phenomenon in history because it is not only a form of *being* but also a form of *becoming* – or rather, it means “not merely to be *in* a history or tradition but to *make* history” (Gillespie, 2008: p. 2—*ital.* original). To be modern means to be 'self-originating' and to be 'creative' – like God. The modern men are about to become the masters of the world and control nature and society, and in this way apply their god-like powers to move further toward the divinity side of the continuum (Gillespie, 2008: p. 2). The argument, here, is that Duns Scotus' version of the *imago dei* doctrine, which was the starting point for the modern man's journey to seek divinity, was itself a reaction to a 'crisis' inside the Christianity of the Middle Ages. That was a crisis about the nature of God and his relationship with man (Gillespie, 2008). Let me explain this crisis through referring to the aforementioned division between the universities of Paris and Oxford, and through the background of the tension in the tradition of *scholasticism*. Then I will return to the Scotist revolution as one of the intellectual answers to this crisis.

3-2. Middle Age schools as embodiments of crisis

Italy is the modern name for a land in the eleventh century which was the place of a turning point in the history of Europe. Christians of the time became neighbours of Muslims of North Africa. Apparently, multiple cultural exchanges between those two civilisations took place. The crisis

of Christian theology, indicatively, began with approaching the Islamic image of the relationship between the creator and the created or the new Arabic/Persian onto-theological system of thought. Furthermore, it was through Muslim thinkers that Europeans were able to rediscover ancient Greek philosophers. The crisis of the man-God relationship (with the spread of Muslim and sometimes Jewish comments on Aristotle in Europe) was turned into a debate between *reason* and *revelation* (MacCulloch, 2010: p. 399). Specifically Ibn-Rushd – or in its Latinised form Averroes (1126-1198) – is a crucial figure here. Ibn-Rushd was a major commentator on Aristotle in the Western part of the Islamic world and Southern Europe of the time. He was also a devout Muslim. Not surprisingly, the tensions between reason (Aristotle and philosophy) and revelation (Muhammad and Islam) became the main theme of his works. His answer to this big question was that the truths of reason and revelation are not two separate truths because the truth must be one united and unique thing. So everything in, say, the Quran is justifiable through philosophy. Correspondingly, every philosophically ‘proven’ truth is identifiable in the Quran. He tried to show that whenever God in the Quran talked about *aq/* (the intellect) in fact He wanted us to philosophise⁴ (Dinani, 2005: chapter 4). However, this solution for the tension between reason and revelation never became predominant in the Islamic world. One sign of this is that Ibn-Rushd was not considered to be

⁴ Ibn-Rushd emphasised these verses of the Quran: “Call to the way of your Lord with *wisdom* and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way” (16:125). Here he interpreted *wisdom* as *philosophy*. In addition, another verse says: “Do they not *reflect* that their companion has not unsoundness in mind; he is only a plain warner” (7:184). And here Ibn-Rushd suggested that “reflection” means “philosophising” (Dinani, 2005).

an important theorist for the mainstream philosophers of the Islamic East⁵ (Nasr and Aminrazavi, 2012: pp. 175-176). His importance thus should be understood in terms of the Western point of view, because of his bridge-like role between two civilisations, and because of being one of the sources of the previously mentioned crisis of the West.

On the European side, one of the first ways of dealing with the crisis was the establishment of the Christian *schools*, for the first time, as the main caretakers of the above-mentioned intellectual crisis. Those institutions were using the Islamic schools of North Africa as their template – specifically the University of Al-Azhar in Cairo (MacCulloch, 2010: pp. 397-400). Even in the beginning, those schools were influenced by Islamic schools in terms of their curriculum. For example, in the case of the University of Bologna, “following Islamic precedent, law rather than theology was the emphasis of the study” (MacCulloch, 2010: pp. 398). After a few decades, during the twelfth century, a university in Paris became the leading Christian school of theology. That place was later named the *Sorbonne* after its most well-known college. During the thirteenth century, Dominicans dominated the University of Paris, the leading figure of which was Thomas Aquinas. The curriculum that Aquinas used to prescribe to those schools also shows his obsession with handling the aforementioned intellectual crisis. It was a fully-fledged programme which used to begin with focusing on the acquisition of skills

⁵ Another incident is that many textbook writers of philosophy at that time in the Islamic world never mentioned Ibn-Rushd in their works, and even some of those who did mentioned his name in the wrong way (like Ibn-Rashid or Ibn-Rashed). Emphasising Ibn-Rushd’s central role in the Islamic world is not only an evident misreading of history but the consequence of a Euro-centric point of view in historiography (see chapter ten).

in grammar and logic. This led the students to mathematics as an exercise of imagination, followed by lessons on natural sciences and finally on metaphysics and theology (MacIntyre, 2009: p. 94). The very structure of these programmes exhibits concern about the unity of philosophy and theology (cf. MacIntyre, 2009: chapter 11). Aquinas believed that philosophy begins with finite beings and from this it makes its way to the knowledge of the final cause, the unmoved mover or God. Theology on the other side begins with God. Subsequently, Aquinas not only wanted to adapt the two sides of reason and revelation but (more or less similar to the argument of Ibn-Rushd) believed that our failure to do so would cause the 'defective knowledge of God'. Alasdair MacIntyre explained the goal of Aquinas in this way:

We understand God as creator in part through a study of the natural order of things and of the human place within that order. Errors about that order and about the human place within it give rise to errors about God himself and our relationship to him. So that philosophy and the natural sciences are required as a complement to theology, as more than a rational prologue to it. (2009: p. 75)

This kind of seeking the 'equilibrium between opposed tendencies' (as Etienne Gilson once mentioned as characteristic of Thomas' ideas) is also discernible in Aquinas's talk of *reason* versus *will of God* (as one of the derivations of the dichotomy of reason and revelation). Aquinas was notably influenced by Aristotle. Aristotle believed that the *blind will* which is not accompanied by knowledge can be called the *animal appetite*. But

when knowledge precedes the will, we can talk about *freedom* which is itself the defining characteristic of man. Aquinas, drawing on Aristotle's argument, believed that on the one hand "choice is essentially an act of the will" and on the other hand without human judgement the "will would not be will" (Gilson, 1940: p. 313). Thus in his equilibrium we may talk about free will for man with which Aristotle was not familiar.

Let us return to the Franciscan/Nominalist/Scotist axis which became dominant at Oxford University after the fourteenth century. On the issue of the *will*, Scotus inverted this Aristotelian/Thomistic image of the *human will* in a way that I will try to explain in the next section. Nominalism was a theoretical resistance against the growth of Aristotelianism in the *scholastic* tradition. The nominalists sought a 'superior synthesis' between Thomism and Augustinianism⁶ (Gillespie, 2008: chapter 1; Bettoni, 1979: p. 19). But the main danger was not the pagan ideas of Aristotle. The prevalent Islamic interpretations of Aristotle was more threatening. This interpretation of the motivation behind the nominalist resistance seems even more persuasive when we put it in the political context of the time after the Crusades when the Muslims' army was still on the other side of the borders of Europe (Gillespie, 2008: pp. 20-23). Duns Scotus and William of Ockham in this situation wanted to defend the omnipotent God whom they used to deem the 'truly Christian

⁶ We might wonder what the Augustinian approach to the relationship between theology and philosophy was. Augustine believed that the philosophical enquiry (the act of *thinking*) is only a tool at the hands of believers to get rid of the barriers that philosophers and sceptics put in the way of faith (the act of *loving*). In book 11 of *The City of God*, he argued that "we both are and know that we are, and delight in our being, and our knowledge of it" because we are made in *the image and likeness of God*. So he started with a certainty about not only *being* but also the *quality of being* (i.e. being in the image and likeness of God). Yet even more than that, this is God's illumination that lets us gain *knowledge of being* (MacIntyre, 2009: p. 26).

God'. Amos Funkenstein also believed that "In constructing his theory of divine attributes Scotus wanted first and foremost to secure God's absolute and infinite will – *libertatem salvare*" (1986: p. 59). The outcomes of the nominalists' intellectual efforts were what are known as the doctrines of the *primacy of the will* and the *univocity of being*.

3-3. Doctrines of the primacy of the will and the univocity of being

Escaping from the Aristotelian God of *via antiqua*, Scotus returned to the God whose omnipotence is his major characteristic (the result of his efforts later was branded as *via moderna*). That was a sort of Franciscan tendency to search for the authentic. The authentic God of Christianity for Scotus was an entity whose *will* is prior to everything, even his own past decisions (otherwise known as natural laws). This was the way that nominalists used to justify the problem of miracles. That is to say, miracles happen when God decides to break his own previously posed laws. That way, they do not involve any contradiction because those laws are also the products of His divine will (Oberman, 2003: p. 32). This is the 'doctrine of the primacy of the will'. For Aquinas it could be blasphemous to claim that God's will is prior even to His justice, for example, because this implies that the divine *will* does not work according to the divine *wisdom* (Oberman, 1983: p. 90). But for Duns Scotus all laws, either divine or human, are positive laws – a kind of contract (Brague, 2007: p. 237). Law is in fact the 'eternal will of God'. The crucial shifting point in the image of God is here, from the Thomistic image with the centrality of God's wisdom to the Scotist power-centred image of God.

But how can we prove the free will of God? The answer to this question is the crux of the issue about Scotus' conception of humanity and his relationship with God.

Scotus' revolutionary methodology of knowing God is the basis of his doctrine of the univocity of being. He suggests that "to understand how we can ascribe will to God we must first analyse what our own freedom involves" (Wolter, 1986: p. 9). Scotus defined three stages for this: "[1] If we take what is a matter of perfection in our will with respect to its acts, [2] eliminate what is a matter of imperfection there, [and then] [3] transfer that which is a matter of perfection in it to the divine, the case at hand immediately becomes clear" (Scotus, 2008: p. 475). So we can have a conception of God's perfection simply by intensifying what we have at hand as finite beings. What is common here between man and God is the status of *being* – i.e. the univocity of being.

Let us take a look at another similar argument by Scotus. He believed that to know God we need first to look around ourselves. Any being is necessarily a member of one of these categories: (1) absolute being (i.e. God); (2) being that exists *per se* (i.e. substance); and (3) being that exists only in another (i.e. accident). Now we can imagine that they all exist. But none of them is equal to *being* as such. So, the question which arises is: can we derive from *things* a *concept* that is much more perfect than *things* themselves? Echoing Scotus, Bettoni answered: "This is impossible, since no being can of itself give rise to knowledge that is more perfect than itself" (Bettoni, 1979: p. 36). Then how can we justify the existence of that certainty about being inside

ourselves? The answer is that being is a light through which everything else can be seen (Bettoni, 1979: p. 33). Scotus took this kind of conception of being from Ibn-Sina or in its Latinised form Avicenna (980-1037), the Persian philosopher of the Islamic Middle Ages (Cunningham, 2002: p. 16). Ibn-Sina in his *al-isharat wa-t-tanbihat* (*Hints and Pointers*) carried out a thought experiment known as The Flying Man experiment. That experiment is about imagining a man created *ex nihilo*, floating in space in a way that he cannot see or hear or feel anything (including his own limbs). In this situation he still would have one certainty: the flying man would be certain that *he exists*.⁷ That is, he might hesitate about the existence of God, the universe or even his own hand, but he cannot hesitate that he *is*. *Ipsso facto* the primary and adequate object of the human intellect is neither God nor man but *being* as such (Bettoni, 1979: p. 32).

Thus we can conclude that Scotus' revolutionary idea changes the relationship between man and God in two ways. First, we need to look at the creature (i.e. human being) to know the creator but not in the way that Aquinas believed. That is, for Scotus the knowledge of God is not the ultimate product of the pincer movement of philosophy and theology; rather, we can know God through examining our own existential status. Second, and more importantly, this methodological point about knowing

⁷ Here I am concerned with Scotus' reading of Ibn-Sina, not what Ibn-Sina really believed. Some recent research shows the European misreading of the original idea of Ibn-Sina. As Hasse showed in his work about the Western reception to Ibn-Sina, the book of *Hints and Pointers* was never translated into Latin. So those who used his hints could not see that a kind of 'indicative method' (already mentioned in the very title of the book) involved in the issue (Hasse, 2000: pp. 89-90). On the other hand, Goodman argued that even the hint was not about the *existence per se* but about the *existence of the soul* (Goodman, 1992: pp. 156-157).

God presupposes that God is different from man not in kind but in degree. When we are talking about being, we are talking about one thing shared between man and God. It is true even in terms of certain characteristics – for example, God is powerful as I am powerful. But my power is imperfect – it has limits, and when I get older I will lose it – while God’s power is perfect and infinite (cf. Fuller, 2011: pp. 79-81; Funkenstein, 1986; Wolter, 1986; Milbank, 2006: chapter 1; Bettoni, 1979: pp. 32-39). The result is that for nominalists, human beings share *being* with God. This is called the doctrine of the univocity of being.⁸ And the idea which I defend is that this doctrine paved the way for the possibility for man to get closer to the God-pole on the continuum of being (Fuller, 2011: p. 81; Milbank, 2006: chapter 1).

4. The Scotist mentality

What we, following Fuller (2012), will call the *Scotist mentality*, emerged in the fourteenth century⁹ but evolved over time to become the cornerstone of modern Prometheanism. Briefly, the main elements of Scotist mentality are as follows. First, we need to start from finite beings

⁸ This doctrine is against the doctrine of equivocation (or the analogical mode of understanding God) which Thomists were supporting.

⁹ How did the nominalist theory become prevalent in Europe after the fourteenth century? Probably the most important reason was the horrible experience in Europe of the Black Death and existential insecurity as its main outcome. The Black Death (which was the unintended result of neighbouring Mongols between 1347 and 1351) was a terrifying experience for Europeans. Considering the level of medical awareness of the time, the plague seemed an unknown, sudden and devastating force which kills the victim in a few days. The “Black” in the name of the disease originally referred not to a symptom but to the dreadfulness of the experience of the plague (Herlihy, 1997: p. 19). Herlihy’s main question is about how the people of Europe at the time reacted, when their environment became so dreadful. One of his answers is that in the intellectual realm nominalism became fashionable (Herlihy, 1997: p. 18, also see: Gillespie, 2008: p. 46). The Thomistic *via antiqua* system of thought could not survive the situation because of its inadequate conceptual framework. That is, the nominalist theoretical resistance against Aristotelianism inside schools coincided with an epidemic disaster which seized and traumatised the outside real life.

to know God. In other words, God is the greatest member of the meta-category of being, while man is the other member of it. To know God, thus, we need to start from our own mode of being, which is a common element between us and Him (i.e. the univocity of being). The knowledge of being, then, is somehow prior even to the knowledge of God. Therefore, this implies that philosophy is prior to theology. Second, God, known by this method, is an omnipotent being who can create any possible world. Not only that, but He is God *because* of this absolute power. Consequently, this God is highly creative and there are also countless possibilities that God might want to realise (i.e. the primacy of the will). Finally, we are created in the image and likeness of God (i.e. *imago dei* doctrine). Thus, not only do we have god-like powers, but also we are obliged to apply those powers – it is a kind of theological mission for us.

5. Cartesian autonomous man and the Deistic Supreme Being

Cartesian *cogito* (which is the hallmark of the second destination in our historical narration) is completely inside the Scotist mentality. Descartes (1595-1650) based all human knowledge on one certainty: *cogito ergo sum*. Thereupon, philosophy, mathematics, science and even theology are based on an *autonomous subject* which is the only source of certainty. Gillespie realised that: “The Cartesian notion of science [...] rests upon a new notion of man as a willing being, modelled on the omnipotent God of nominalism and able, like him, to master nature through the exercise of his infinite will” (2008: pp. 40-41). Accordingly, Cartesian unaided reason was the ‘ultimate authority’. In the same vein,

Hans Blumenberg described the birth moment of this reason as 'the absolute beginning' (1983: pp. 145-7). Indicatively, this concept marks the birth moment of an autonomous man and is the absolute beginning of Prometheanism. However, the Promethean man, ingeniously, rejected the history of its constitution. Thus, one cannot put this reason in the historical context because it is not considered to be a *historical construction* but a 'discovery'. By Descartes' *cogito*, man's reason considered to be appeared after its eclipse in the Middle Ages. Not surprisingly, Descartes and Bacon declared the end of history. They defined history respectively as the 'totality of prejudices' and the 'system of idols' which via and after reason now came to an end (Blumenberg, 1983: p. 146).

This Cartesian man with the authority of reason was the key figure of the Enlightenment project of the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment will-centred conception of man challenged any sort of *exception* and encouraged a sense of the value of democracy, because what makes all of us equal is this common ground of *being*. Carl Schmitt in his famous *Political Theology* (1985) emphasised that "The rationalism of the Enlightenment rejected the exception in every form" (Schmitt, 1985: p. 37). Consequently, an anti-exception and pro-democracy interpretation of the idea of providence was initiated by the fathers of the Enlightenment. Providence for them meant 'the good will of God for *all* men to be happy'. This conception of providence has a negative side; according to them, God does not want the good only to one certain group of people. For example, they have refuted the Jewish notion of 'the

chosen people' (Betts, 1984: pp. 121-122). On the other hand, the positive side of the new secular concept of providence is a revolution in their conception of history. For them history became the field of unrealised possibilities. Drawing on past discussions, the argument goes as follows. First, God's will is prior to anything, even his own past decisions. Then, he can will new possibilities. Second, man is created in the image and likeness of God and so, finally man can also open new horizons by creating other possible worlds. Moreover, the human being becomes fully human to the point that he realises the new possibilities, i.e. creation as a kind of divine mission for human beings. The idea of making paradise on Earth is the result of this type of seeing the future as a 'dynamic horizon' (Löwith, 1949: p. 111). Thus, the future of the Enlightenment figures was an open realm for man to apply his own god-like power.

Accordingly, in this second stage of the constitution of the modern Promethean man, the relationship between man and God is not broken. God is instead excluded from the world and history while the modern autonomous man represents His will on Earth (Schmitt, 1985: p. 59). The radical form of this conception of God, which emerged in France at this time, is known as *deism*, a theology in which many Enlightenment figures believed. The Supreme Being of Deists was a being who was not the inhabitant of the world and did not apply his power to determine every single detail of our life. Instead, he used to will the good for human being in general. *Deists* of the time (like Voltaire) not only rejected the revealed

religions (specifically Catholicism) but were also hostile to atheism (cf. McGrath, 2004: p. 25).

It is noteworthy that one of the first texts of the deistic literature was a book called *L'Espion Turc* ('The Turkish Spy', 1684) by Jean Paul Marana (1642-1693). His method of writing, which was a precedent to Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* ('The Persian Letters', 1721), was based on – one might say – a thought experiment. Both of them imagined a foreigner travelling to France and describing the political situation and religious beliefs of that society. In this genre the writer was assuming the fictional persona of someone from a radically different culture looking at the present situation. What would he see? What would we look like? For Montesquieu this was a satirical way to criticise French politics and Catholic dogmas. But for Marana, this genre was useful for showing another possible system of belief. The new possibility for Marana was deism, which was considered to be a common ground between the three Abrahamic religions (Betts, 1984: p. 99). He detached a Turkish Muslim from his own form of life with all of its linguistic games, meanings, certainties and dogmas, then threw him into a new world with a new form of life. The Turkish Spy (whose name is Mahmut) gradually found the common ground between those religions (God or the Supreme Being) and became a deist. "[H]is tone" of talk about religions "may be detached or even sceptical, but never destructive" (Betts, 1984: p. 101). Marana's experiment was similar to Ibn-Sina and Scotus' aforementioned *flying man* experiment. Marana also came to a similar conclusion: the big moment for Mahmut was when he understood that morality is prior to

belief. As such, you might believe in any religion but you should remain moral. As a result, prioritising morality over the revealed religion indicates the priority of the natural over the super-natural. In other words, the moral and the happy life is something that man can attain unaided. Defending the ability of the human, unaided mind still does not mean that the transcendental God does not exist (Betts, 1984: p. 17). The highly transcendental God exists but as a clockmaker – a *supra mundane intelligence* who made the world. But after creation, natural laws govern the world without his interference, like a clock which works without the assistance of the clockmaker.¹⁰

6. The advent of the modern Promethean man

In the last phase of our historical survey, God became an illusory entity and the product of human consciousness or the projection of man's mind into the sky. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), the figure of this phase, mainly predicated his theory of religion on Hegel's philosophy. But unlike Hegel, Feuerbach did not believe that religion is something between us and God. Instead, the absolute being is inside us. The religious figures are in fact the projections of the essential predicates of the nature of man. So, accordingly, religion turned out to be a kind of alienation of man from himself. The famous formulation of Feuerbach's notion of the relationship between man and God has been mentioned in the very first lines of the second chapter of his *The Essence of Christianity* (1841): "Religion is the disuniting of man from himself. He

¹⁰ This conception was attributed to Newton by the Enlightenment figures; however, Newton never thought of it.

sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is. Man is not what God is. [...] But in religion man contemplates his own latent nature” (Feuerbach, 1957: p. 33). Thus, Feuerbach’s mission is to show that God is the ‘differencing’ of man with his nature. What follows from these preliminary notes is that theology must be replaced by anthropology. Another conclusion is that the concealed reality of Christianity underneath its appearance is atheism (Harvey, 1995: p. 25). In this way he not only rejects the religious truth but he also shows how atheism is the inherent logic of religion (and here Christianity).

What was the starting point for Feuerbach’s deduction of atheism from Christianity? I would suggest that he was under the indirect influence of a tradition of thought which was started by Scotus. Through the doctrine of the univocity of being, as has been mentioned above, the nominalists of the Middle Ages and then their Protestant pupils implied that the human rational faculties are divinely inspired and men are gifted with the ability to expand toward the opposite pole of the continuum of being – i.e. God’s pole. This is the point that Feuerbach pushed to the extreme. He believed that the scholars of the Middle Ages united God and man but not completely. Feuerbach asked: “Did not the old mystics, schoolmen, and fathers, long ago compare the incomprehensibility of the divine nature with that of the human intelligence, and thus, in truth, identify the nature of God with the nature of man?” And he answered that the Middle Ages’ scholars put man and God on the two sides of one continuum because God as God is “nothing else than the reason in its utmost intensification become objective to itself” (1957: p. 36). Therefore,

the deity side of the continuum has been identified as an illusion and discredited. Feuerbach's thesis is the end of a long path which started with Duns Scotus. In each step of this journey man and God grew closer and increasingly similar. Therefore, the monopolised powers and exclusive characteristics of God were increasingly attributed to man. What Feuerbach did was to destroy the last bridge between the finite and the infinite by disclosing the emptiness of the infinite. That is, Feuerbach only declared the success of a project at the end of a long historical process. That was a process of castrating the concept of a transcendental God and also making up the modern concept of humanity as a Promethean creature.

Karl Marx, in his early works, was impressed by Feuerbach's thesis. However, in his later works, he began to criticise Feuerbach for not being radical enough. In chapter three, I will argue that Marx's radicalised point of view led him to articulate the other aspect of Prometheanism. That is to say, Prometheanism for Marx had two sides of *rebellion against the transcendental* but also, importantly, a side which emphasised *self-creative aspects of man*. So, man is a self-making entity and 'alienation' is the description of man's detachment from himself. For Feuerbach, alienation meant to empty the real world for the sake of enriching God or putting man's essence outside man (Lobkowitz, 1967: p. 253). In his sixth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx confirmed the Feuerbachian conception of alienation but he pushed it further by saying:

Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in

each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations (Marx, 1938).

The 'ensemble of the social relations' foreshadows Marx's notion of class which also has a pragmatic connotation. That is to say, to become truly radical means that one should consider that history is the result of man's own practices. So, to change the existing circumstances one needs to engage with practice which will turn into circumstance of tomorrow (Lobkowitz, 1967: p. 417). Both the usage of the Promethean metaphor and the notions of reification and alienation can be traced back to Marx's very early poems and also his doctoral dissertation. S. S. Sprawer in his review of the young Marx, found that he constantly referred to feeling Godlike and superior to the man-made world, specifically the 'oppressiveness of the modern city'. One of the dominant themes of his poetry was the purpose of showing that buildings are nothing but bricks. They have not made themselves. They instead are the products of 'human ingenuity'. He constantly refers to 'an overpowering drive to action' (Sprawer, 1976: p. 12). In writing this very poem and, "In speaking of his love, [...] the poetic persona or 'lyric I', feels at once to Prometheus and to Jove" (Sprawer, 1976: p. 11). And again, in the preface to his doctoral dissertation he wrote: "Prometheus is the foremost saint and martyr in the philosopher's calendar" and also, that "It is better to be slave to the rock than to serve Father Zeus as his faithful messenger" (Sprawer, 1976: p. 23).

More significant, is the content of his doctoral thesis. He drew an implicit parallel between Prometheus and the state of modern philosophy.

Answering the central question raised by Hegelian philosophy, he argued for the same transition that he argued took place in Greek philosophy. Marx believed that the speculative metaphysics of antiquity had turned to practical ethics. So, Hegel's abstract philosophy also needs a practical translation. The "inward illumination", so to speak, needs to be translated into the "outside flames" (Sprawer, 1976: p. 27). In a way, Marx was interested in Aristotle's heirs because as a Young Hegelian, he was concerned about his own intellectual position as an heir of Hegel (Lobkowitz, 1967: p. 240). One can interpret this radicalisation of Feuerbach's materialism by Marx in the light of the parallels drawn with Aristotle and Prometheus which have been discussed here.

7. Prometheus versus Jesus

Social theory as the embodiment of the modern will to control man's life was based on Promethean conception of humanity (Milbank, 2006). The founding father of modern social theory is August Comte (about whom I will write more in the next chapters). We know that at the end of his life, Comte called himself the First Great Priest of the Religion of Humanity (Pickering, 2009: p. 525) and tried to establish a secular version of Catholicism. His idea was to praise man's historical achievements through some religious-like organised rituals. This was to escape from the spiritual crisis of the modern age which was caused by the Enlightenment hostility toward any spiritual power in society. Humanity was not only the name of his new secular religion but also at the centre of his ideas. He praised this humanity without excluding religions from its history. Following Feuerbach's insights, Comte used to

think of religion as nothing more than the projection of man's mind into the sky. But also he defined religions as the necessary childhood of humanity. Passing through religious ideas was a necessary step toward becoming mature. Therefore, he also praised prophets for facilitating the maturity of man. In this way, he also mimicked the Catholic religious calendar of saints and made up his own version of the calendar. The secular calendar of Comte contained the names of scientists (like Newton), poets (like Percy Shelley) and even prophets (like Zarathustra). But the curious fact is that he never mentioned Jesus in his calendar – why? Given that he was evidently mimicking Catholicism, ignoring the main figure of Christianity would not be easily justifiable. Moreover, Comte once rejected the very historical existence of Jesus (Voegelin, 1999: p. 201).

We need to find the answer in the problematic moment of the unity of man and God in Jesus and his hybrid entity. What Comte did, following the Scotist mentality, was the divinisation of the human being in its *intra-mundane* form and also the rejection of the transcendental beings. Comte rejected even the very existence of Jesus not by offering the historical evidence for his claim but because of Christ's half-God nature. The half-God nature of Jesus is transcendental, so Jesus is beyond history. Thus, it has no history and what has no history for Comte does not exist (Voegelin, 1999: p. 201). Comte, also, used to consider the other half, the human half, of Jesus as his rival. Comte more than anything else wanted to divinise man. That is what Jesus Christ did by his own very life, i.e. becoming god-like man who came to save human being. Christ himself

was the embodiment of the 'perfect man' that Comte intended to be and to make. Jesus was a successful God who established Christianity and the church. Comte was mimicking Christ in order to be the Christ of modern times. He could not live in peace with the name of Jesus in his calendar. I agree with Voegelin's answer: "The rejection of Jesus" by Comte was owing to "a personal affair" (1999: p. 196).

On the continuum of being (in which man is on one side and God is on the other), Fuller mentioned that Jesus is "a being who somehow provides a precedent for all of humanity by traveling along this ontological continuum" (Fuller, 2011: p. 84). So, in this way we might be able to justify the love-hate relationship between modern Promethean man and Jesus. The hybrid nature of Jesus was a precedent for modern man who would undertake a Promethean mission of divinising the world of immanent entities (Voegelin, 1999: p. 193).

8. Conclusion: The image changed

In this chapter I have discussed a significant change in the image of the relationship between man and God. It was a change from an image of God who is different from creatures in kind to an image of God who is a member of the bigger category of *being*, so that he is not different from creatures in *kind* but in *degree*. The former conception of God used to describe Him as wise, while the second conception of God depicted Him as a being with the will prior to his wisdom. This theological turning point in Christianity in the Middle Ages caused a big paradigm shift which became a metaphysical framework for the emergence of modern

humanity. That is, it put man and God on two sides of the continuum of being; furthermore, the hybrid figure of Christ (as the Son of God and the Son of Man) became a precedent for the unity of both sides of the continuum in one body. What I have called the modern Promethean man is the final product of the radicalisation of this unity by attribution of God's powers to man. Finally, Feuerbach's atheism inverted theism rather than negated it. He considered atheism not as something contra religion but as its lining. This was the end of the continuum of being by the dissolution of the God side of it.

Modern atheism is the outcome of this process, and its specific character is not the mere rejection of the existence of God but also considers man as the creator of God. While in this chapter I was dealing with the historical process in which a theological change of image paradoxically gave birth to atheism, in the next chapter I will describe two types of recent atheisms.

Chapter Two

The Emergence of Tourist Atheism

1. Introduction

In the past chapter, the process of the emergence of the modern Promethean man and the relevance of the nominalist shift in theology has been discussed. Considering modern atheism as the last point of the historical generation of the modern Prometheus, the central question of the present chapter is about the typology of the modern Prometheanism in our time. Previously, I showed the difference between the Dominican and the Franciscan roots of modernity. Next I defined modern Prometheanism as the result of the inversion of the relationship between God and man (i.e. man became the creator of God) which is (primarily but not exclusively) the historical outcome of the Franciscan/Scotist axis. This was the beginning of modern atheism. Here, I will explain the relationship between that beginning and this end by suggesting a new typology of recent atheisms. Following Zygmunt Bauman's typology of modern identities (Bauman, 1996), I will separate 'pilgrim atheism' from 'tourist atheism' which are the extensions of two Scotist doctrines – respectively, the doctrine of the primacy of the will and the doctrine of *haecceitas* (*haecceity* or individuation). I will also suggest that the will-centred discourse of tourist atheism is on the rise. This new type of

Prometheanism in our time tends to follow the path of subjective pleasure (like a tourist) rather than searching for the pre-existing laws in the temple of the universe (like a pilgrim).

2. Pilgrim atheism versus tourist atheism

Charles Taylor suggested three forms of unbelief in the modern age. In his *A Secular Age*, Taylor argued that in the modern world, receiving spiritual richness and moral fullness from somewhere which is detached from a transcendental being has turned into one option for people, among many others (Taylor, 2007). I will write about his scheme in the next chapter. For now, we need to recall that for Taylor, detached ways of receiving fullness can take three forms. One can put Kant, Feuerbach and Camus in the first category. These figures put forward completely different versions of experiencing detached fullness. What is common amongst all their work, though, is the idea that we all experience some sort of *autonomous inside reason*. For example, Kant believed in a form of inside rational agency which is able to make laws. Feuerbach, however, famously considered God as something inside the human psyche which we project into the sky. And Camus saw human beings as vulnerable to both suffering, weakness but also capable of bravery and audacity. For Camus, the main challenge in our lifetime was to reach the stage of 'devising our own rules of life' (Taylor, 2007: pp. 8-9). So, all in all, the figures of the first category of modern detached unbelief see *something inside* human beings which can be the source of the experience of fullness. The second category, Taylor argued, are those who receive fullness somewhere else and not through autonomous

reason. We can put deep ecologists in this category. So, they, in contrast with the first group, receive fullness from *somewhere else*—not through autonomous reason. That is to say, they might believe that fullness can be found in nature or in an ‘inner depth’ or in a harmony of the both (Taylor, 2007: p. 9). This connects mostly with a romantic critique of reason and the Enlightenment. Finally, Taylor talks about the post-modernist which in brief is the negative view about *something which is always not there*. The figures of the last category criticise both the idea of an internal reason and an outside nature along with any conception of harmony and recovered unity. Taylor’s description of a so-called ‘post-modern’ unbelief is those intellectual positions which express themselves in a negative way, through rejecting others.

These are views [...] which deny, attack or scoff at the claims of self-sufficient reason, but offer no outside source for the reception of power. They are as determined to undermine and deny Romantic notions of solace in feeling, or in recovered unity, as they are to attack the Enlightenment dream of pure thinking; and they seem often even more eager to underscore their atheist convictions.
(Taylor, 2007: p. 10)

Taylor dismisses this last type of unbelief because he believes that there is a twist in their arguments. The point is that the post-modernists can only survive with negation. So they claim that the age of Grand Narrative has come to an end. But they need and utilise a narrative to justify their positions: “[once] we were into grand stories, but [now] we

have realized their emptiness and we proceed to the next stage” (Taylor, 2007: p. 717)¹¹.

In contrast, one of the main points of this research is to show the importance of a so-called post-modern unbelief (and specifically the trend that I will call tourist atheism). In arguing Against Taylor’s thesis, I do not think that the post-modern unbelief is based on the mere negation of the narratives that it implicitly uses. The point about post-modernism is not the mere rejection of Grand Narratives, but the belief in the plurality of narratives. It is more about the rejection of the portrayal of a Grand Narrative as a truth-tracking story that its “epistemic validity transcends the perspectival contingency of its own spatiotemporal determinacy” (Susen, 2015: p. 40). In other words, I would argue that rejection of the grand narrative is not a necessary part of a ‘post-modern’ intellectual standpoint. Post-modernism, as explored by Simon Susen in his recent erudite book is about the rejection of the possibility of those narratives and, say, social theories that are ‘projects of unmasking’.

As unmasking endeavours, macro-theoretical approaches aim to uncover an *underlying storyline*, which is believed to be inherent in the structural composition of society and the processual unfolding of human actions. (Susen, 2015: p. 41-
- *Ital. Original*)

In other words, the problem was not the narratives *per se*. Instead their cognitive ambitious claim was problematic. The idea of a mega-

¹¹ This is also Taylor’s main criticism of Rorty’s philosophy (Taylor, 1996: p. 257).

narrative and a mega-theory which is going to expose the hidden reality was the target of their criticism not the narrative. Thus, attributing some narratives to the post-modernist stories about its own constitution is not a twist in argument. It, is rather, a mere story to give a consistency to one's current position which, by the way, does not contain any specific epistemic privilege.

That way of defining post-modern unbelief resonates with Taylor's thesis that modern unbelief can only define itself as a sort of *achievement* or as a kind of '*overcoming* of our illusions about God' (Taylor, 2007: p. 27 and 268). In this chapter, I will argue for the existence of a post-modern type of atheism which is not defined by its intention of overcoming religion; instead it has been defined by its treatment of religion as a repository of cultural heritage. What I will call 'tourist atheism' can be considered as a 'post-modern atheism' which means that it treats religion as a story which is not uncovering any deep truth. Rather, it is a useful story which does not need to be discarded completely. A tourist atheist would argue that even if we discard 'religious illusions', there is not any hidden reality that will appear.

Finally, one can safely consider what I will call 'pilgrim atheism' as one of the branches of Taylor's first category of unbelief (i.e. an autonomous reason inside); while one can consider some branches of the environmentalist movements to Taylor's second category. For example, Edward Abbey (1927-1989) as an essayist and, crucially in terms of the argument I present here, a deep ecologist author. Famously he did not want to be called an atheist and preferred the term 'an earth-

ist' (Taylor, 2001: p. 182). However, Abbey's and other's obsession with nature overshadows their rejection of traditional religions and even the existence of supernatural beings. Thus, that aspect of their point of views has never been fully expanded either against or for religion. So, here I would prefer to focus more on tourist/post-modernist atheism which I would suggest is a promising movement which is changing modern Prometheanism from inside.

Stephen LeDrew, for his part, put forward a division between *humanist atheism*, of say Feuerbach, and *scientific atheism*, of Dawkins for instance (LeDrew, 2012: pp. 70-86). This division, for LeDrew, is grounded in an old, late nineteenth-century split between natural sciences and humanities. Scientific atheism, on the one hand, is mainly based on Darwinism and the theory of evolution as the alternative to the religious explanations of the creation. Humanistic atheism, on the other hand, tends to consider religion "a social phenomenon and a symptom of alienation and oppression"¹² (LeDrew, 2012: p. 71). There are two problems with this dichotomy. First of all, LeDrew mentioned Feuerbach as the first humanist atheist (LeDrew, 2012: p. 78). By doing this, he anachronistically applied the late nineteenth-century split between humanism and naturalism to Feuerbach, who died a few decades before that. Feuerbach was a 'humanist' but his humanism was based on his conception of anthropology which was a science built upon Kant and Herder's conceptions of the science of man. Thus, it was thoroughly

¹² Probably the best example of the humanistic atheism is Ludwig Feuerbach's aforementioned thesis on the replacement of anthropology with theology (see the last chapter).

naturalistic. This makes the division between scientism and humanism meaningless. Second, this division, even if true for the nineteenth century, does not seem valid any more. We are, currently, witness to new versions of atheism in Western Europe and North America which are difficult to place in only one of those two categories since they adopt some elements from both sides. In the next chapters I will write about a new version of atheism which is known as *atheism 2.0* and based on the idea of considering religion as part of human cultural heritage. In fact, it tries to take advantage of the religious elements (like ceremonies, rituals, and clever ideas, for example) for an atheistic but happy life (see part three). Considering the aforementioned division between scientific and humanistic atheisms, we need to ask how to consider this newly-emerged type of atheism: as a scientific atheism or a humanistic one?

Starting from this insufficiency of that typology of modern atheisms, and regarding the past discussion on Prometheanism, I want to put forward a new division between 'pilgrim atheism' and 'tourist atheism'. This new typology, which is limited to the continuation of the Scotist axis in our time, borrows two metaphors from an article on identity by Zygmunt Bauman (1996) in which he made a comparison between two types of characters: pilgrim versus tourist. Before applying that division to modern atheisms, let us compare those two types here. Consider an imaginary temple in Varanasi in India. Visiting that temple, an Indian pilgrim and a European tourist would have vastly different experiences. The temple for the pilgrim is a place for a profound spiritual experience. One might not consider himself a true pilgrim, but he is certain that the truth is always

there. The truth for the pilgrim is always in the distance. The life of the pilgrim is also considered to be a journey to find that truth. The pilgrim also sees the temple as a unity. Moreover, the pilgrimage experience is about continuity. All these elements combine in a narrative the effect of which makes “each event the effect of the event before and the cause of the event after” (Bauman, 1996: p. 23). As a consequence, there is a sense of progress inherent in the pilgrimage. The idea of progress is interwoven with the presumption of an absolute and unique destination or an expected moment of truth in the future.

In contrast, a tourist’s experience of the temple is a fragmentary experience; that is, the touristic conception of the temple is a loosely patched image of a historical site. A tourist cannot see the unity of the temple. He would be an observer and what he observes is a combination of some old buildings, shiny windowpanes and wooden doorways. For the tourist the temple is not a unique place. The Varanasi temple is as interesting a site as Big Ben in London – both are regarded as remarkable places. This fragmented view of the world does not emanate from the purposelessness of the touristic experience. As Bauman correctly emphasised there is a goal for the touristic experience. But it is a subjective one: pleasure, amusement or adventure (Bauman, 1996: p. 29). The world for a tourist is not a meaningful unity; rather, it is a combination of fascinating spots where one can maximise one’s pleasure. Therefore, if pilgrimage is about the objective truth, tourism is about the subjective pleasure.

Accordingly, I want to use these metaphors for two rival categories of modern atheisms. First of all '*pilgrim atheism*', a category which includes both scientific and humanistic atheisms. Both of these tendencies have a clear criterion of the division between the true and the false. It is a well-known fact that scientific atheism sees religion as the *by-product* of something else. That 'something' is a deep-seated cause or innate law behind religious attitudes which needed to be discovered by natural sciences – especially biology – or be revealed by social sciences – especially anthropology (Dawkins, 2006aa: chapter 5; Hinde, 1999: chapters 17 and 18; Boyer, 2002: chapter 1; Harvey, 1995: chapter 1). So 'pilgrim atheism' first presumes that religion is just an appearance. The reality of this appearance should be shown through certain tasks. The mission of the scientist or anthropologist is this revealing effort. Second, because of the presumption of that destination pilgrim atheism contains the ideal of progress. In most cases the ideal of progress goes beyond implication and becomes the basis of the theories of pilgrim atheists – as was the case for Spencer. The famous representative figure of this type of atheism is Richard Dawkins (2006).

The second category would be '*tourist atheism*'. Tourist atheism, just like tourism itself, is a recent phenomenon. It emerged after the so-called 'postmodern turn'. Echoing Bauman, I have mentioned that we can define the touristic approach by its subjective goal: seeking pleasure, amusement and adventure for oneself rather than pursuing the objective truth. Tourist atheism, in the same vein, starts with this Sartrean assumption: "there is no other universe except the human universe, the

universe of human subjectivity” (qtd. in Geroulanos, 2010: p. 9). Tourist atheism focuses on human existence, human suffering, or more generally human subjectivity. Tourist atheism is not necessarily known by its support of the scientific truth as the ultimate truth but it is not necessary to assume any contradiction between science and this version of atheism. The main point is that for tourist atheists the strict, universally valid division between the true and the false is fading away. And more importantly tourist atheists do not consider science in radical contrast with religion. They see the difference between the two but for them one does not necessarily dominate the other. Tourist atheism, in its recent version, is an ongoing project which is planning not merely for the rejection of but for the *occupation* and *expropriation*¹³ of theism (Watkin, 2011: p. 14). The main public figure of this second category of atheism would be Alain de Botton (2012).

But we cannot comprehend these two types of atheism without considering their theological backgrounds. In the next sections, I will argue that each of these two categories of atheism (as two types of Prometheanism) is also the result of the extension of a Scotist doctrine. ‘Pilgrim atheism’ is the extension of the doctrine of ‘the primacy of the will’ while ‘tourist atheism’ is the extension of ‘the doctrine of individuation’ (or *haecceitas*). In the last chapter I indicated that I tend to see the modern Prometheanism (and its final product modern atheism) as the upshot of the Scotist narration inside the nominalist theological movement of the late Middle Ages. The *imago dei* doctrine was the central idea for that

¹³ Below, I will write about the relationship between tourism and expropriation in brief and I will return to it in part three.

movement; we have been created in the image and likeness of God. But it is crucial for our discussion to elucidate what is there in God that we as creatures are ordained to imitate.

3. Pilgrim Atheism

In our time the most prominent representatives of what I called *pilgrim atheism* are the (so-called) four horsemen of *New Atheism*.¹⁴ The renowned characteristic of *New Atheists* is the way they devote themselves to media. They are the writers of the best sellers and self-help books. They also take any opportunity to appear on TV or make their own documentaries. And furthermore, they are great fans of social media like Twitter and Facebook. That is, pilgrim atheists try not to remain isolated in their own laboratories and libraries. They contact people and invite them to their own beliefs. On a public scale they challenge the other's religious beliefs. Peter Boghossian's *A Manual for Creating Atheists* (2013) is the most recent example of a theorisation of this public engagement. In it, Boghossian tries to introduce strategies for talking people out of religious faith (Boghossian, 2013). But the New Atheists' proselytising activities are not limited to the theoretical level. They were even highly active in lobbying to make organisational changes, for example in education policy.¹⁵

We need to step back and ask why it is such an important mission for New Atheists to convince others of their atheistic beliefs. We might

¹⁴ Richard Dawkins for the first time called his own project a 'pilgrimage' in the title of a book called *The Ancestor's Tale: the pilgrimage to the dawn of evolution* (2005).

¹⁵ For example, The British Humanist Association tried to make 'humanism' a subject in religious education classes in Britain. In addition, Richard Dawkins in a letter to David Heywood declared that theology should not be taught in universities (Dawkins, 2007).

wonder why pilgrim atheists are such proselytisers. Why is the truth of scientific achievement and the necessity of acknowledging that truth by others so important for them? Let us ask this question in another way: why pilgrim atheists targeted the '*ignorance*' of people i.e. they want to prepare people with the '*scientific truth*'? Why do they not target, say, the *suffering* of human beings? Why do they not give priority to assuaging the pains of the human being, regardless of man's ignorance?

4-1. Science and discovering the laws of the temple of the universe

The answer is detectable in the Christian backdrop of modern atheism. It is likely that if modern atheism had accidentally emerged in a Buddhist context, say in India, it could have been more about *assuaging the sufferings*, rather than the quest for the *truth*. But in the Christian context pilgrim atheism chose science (not literature, for instance) as a battleground. But what was there in modern science that pilgrim atheists found appealing? The basic thesis here is that the same roots which gave birth to modern science also led us to pilgrim atheism. Thus, I will start with the *pilgrim scientists* and then proceed to *pilgrim atheism* at the end.

The goal of modern science at its sixteenth and seventeenth century origin was to give man godlike power. Modern science was a tool to give divine power to a man who has been created in *the image and likeness of God*. And it was achieved through a radical change in the image of God for believers during the fourteenth-century nominalist revolution. As I mentioned in the last chapter, for the nominalists the will

of God was prior to his wisdom. Then, the God of nominalism was a *wilful being*. This primacy of the will was also attributed to man which connected the extremes of God and man by considering them as two poles of the continuum of being. So *man also became a wilful being* (see chapter one). This wilful being was about to control nature and society through science. The scientist's mission was to search for the natural laws *qua* the logic of the creation by the wilful God. Thus to find out what the ultimate goal of science was, we need to ask: (1) In what terms was such a wilful God conceived? (2) How could a wilful man imitate that God? We need to answer this question first to be able to come back to the doctrine of the primacy of the will and its role in the constitution of modern science as well as pilgrim atheism.

To get an accurate image of the nominalist *wilful God* we need to start from the fact that the main product of the Scotist tradition was that it inverted the traditional definition of being. For the Christian philosophers of *via antiqua*, being was considered to be beyond time (Gillespie, 2008: p. 36). Thus, it was being *par excellence*. This conception of being as such was a Jewish insight. When Moses asked God about His *quiddity*, God did not call himself the *pure act of thinking* as Aristotle used to believe; rather, he replied with '*ego sum qui sum*' ('I am who I am'). According to *via antiqua* that means God referred to his very existence because God is *existence: pure being* (Gilson, 1940: pp. 49-51). Traditionally, *change* used to be considered the sign of the *imperfection* if not the *corruption* of being. It was specifically true about the nature of God. Then, God was the Real, the unchanged or the unmoved-mover. In

contrast, following the nominalist poetic revolution, not only did *change* stop being considered the sign of the imperfection of being, but God himself then became *changeable*. More precisely, through allowing the central role for will in God's being, He turned into *change par excellence*. For example, this God also creates, but for nominalists and their Protestant pupils, creation depends on His will. Thus creation is an ongoing project because it depends on the will of God. God wills and creates at every single moment (Wolter, 1986: Introduction). In this way, nominalism inverted that traditional ontology by considering God not as "the ultimate whatness or quiddity of all beings but their howness or becoming" (Gillespie, 2008: p. 36). In the following centuries the mission of modern science has been defined, accordingly, "to discover the divinely ordered character of the world", which thus means "to investigate becoming" (Gillespie, 2008: p. 36). And for this goal one needs to discover the natural laws which are governing the *motion* of all beings (Gillespie, 2008: p. 36). Concisely, with the new image of God as a *wilful* creator, and the new image of the world as the collection of creations in motion, the new image of man was also constituted. Man (who has been created *in the image and likeness of God*) for his salvation, needs to become god-like. And for this purpose man needs to discover the laws of nature and control nature and society as God does. Modern science also kept alive the hope for discovering the natural laws and looking at the world from God's perspective, also known as an objective point of view. In this way the nature of what we have called the *wilful man* is interwoven with that image of the nominalist God.

4-2. Jesus, scientist and pilgrim

In the Christian context God was incarnated in Jesus. I wrote about the centrality of the modern interpretation of Jesus Christ in the emergence of modern Prometheus in the last chapter. We should now recall that Jesus turned into Christ when he “acquired the capacity to see everything from God’s point-of-view, the so-called ‘view from nowhere’” (Fuller, 2011: p. 99). This kind of epistemic reading of the character of Jesus was a theological precedent for the ideal of scientific ‘objectivism’. For example, the ideal of Victorian physics was to explain the world through mathematical laws. This was a way to unite different branches of physics (heat, light, mechanics, etc.) in one scheme (Fara, 2009: pp. 199-200). And this was because mathematics used to be considered as highly objective knowledge and thus similar to God’s point of view. The one who possesses this objective knowledge is the scientist. Therefore, that Christian motif preceded the depiction of the modern scientist as the saviour. It was only in the later stages (i.e. the late nineteenth century, post-Darwinian era) that the contradiction between religion and science appeared. Thus the character of Christ dissolved in the figure of the modern scientist and the existence or non-existence of the distant God of nominalism became irrelevant. But what remained is the Christ-like scientist who needs to attain God-like power by discovering the laws of nature and society through scientific efforts. This was considered to be the only way to progress.

Two historical examples about the Christ-like character of the scientist would help to clarify the argument. Henry Brougham (1778-

1868) was a British statesman who founded the *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* in 1825. This society for the first time in modern times started to publish cheap scientific books. But, as Patricia Fara (2009) believes, this was not for the sake of democracy, or for that matter, for an equal opportunity for all people to have access to scientific ideas. Rather, the organisers of this society

acted like scientific missionaries with a hidden agenda. Even the name they chose reveals their feelings of superiority, implying that a core elite sent down to the working classes pre-digested information that was not necessarily intellectually demanding, but would help them carry out their work more efficiently. (Fara, 2009: p. 201)

The noteworthy point is that there was an ideology behind this kind of popularising science. This 'democratisation' of knowledge was an ideological tool at the hand of statesmen and scientists to persuade the crowds that the way to progress is through nothing but science. In order to persuade, one needs to emphasise the ultimate goal of science which is 'truth' and also the representation of the scientist as the saviour or the Christ.

Many studies show that this sacred halo was still around the heads of scientists in the twentieth century, and even continues to exist in contemporary times. Jeffrey Alexander (2003) studied the reports of popular magazines about the first generation of computers in the period between 1944 and 1975. He shows that the tone and diction of many

reports were religious and mythical while they were “filled with wishful rhetoric of salvation and damnation” (Alexander, 2003: p. 187). He also quotes from a report in *Time* magazine:

Arranged row upon row in air conditioned rooms, waited upon by crisp young white-shirted men who move softly among them like priests serving in a shrine, the computers go about their work quietly and, for the most part, unseen from the public. (qtd. in Alexander, 2003: p. 188)

The scene that the journalist in *Time* is describing for the public audience is not about a cluster of scientists working in their own laboratories. But they are pilgrims of science and technology. Technology, in this case the computer, is a tool which can work without the intervention of human values. So the computer will objectively help us to solve all the problems “on earth as well as those posed by the celestial universe” (qtd. in Alexander, 2003: p. 187). This belief was so serious that *Time’s* journalist concluded his report with this assertion: “when we want to consult the deity, we go to the computer because it’s the closest thing to God to come along” (qtd. in Alexander, 2003: p. 188).

Briefly, regarding the nominalist belief that we have been created *in the image and likeness of God*, one needs to remember that for the scientists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mimicking God was more about attaining His epistemological objective point of view. God was the divine sovereign because of His objective knowledge and the scientist can become close to God by possession of that kind of

knowledge. Furthermore, the ontological sovereignty over nature and society will be the outcome of that epistemological advantage which is owing to technology (Fuller, 2011: p. 101). The depiction of the scientist as someone like Christ, priest or pilgrim, is the outcome of that wilful picture of man. As modern science was the result of the extension of the doctrine of *the primacy of the will*, the model of the 'pilgrim scientist' was also the result of the extension of the role of the wilful sovereign God (and his Son) to the realm of humanity. When, through the emergence of the modern Prometheanism, God was made secondary, the theological discourse did not disappear. It remained intertwined with science and later on also formed pilgrim atheism. The proselytising role of the atheist-scientists (like most of the *New Atheists*) is understandable under this rubric.

4-3. Pilgrim scientists and pilgrim atheists

Still one last question remains untouched. All scientists are not atheists and all atheists are not scientists. Therefore we need to clarify where those two categories overlap. What is the relationship between pilgrim atheism and pilgrim scientific approaches? The answer is detectible in the history of modern science and its achievements in the nineteenth century –that is, the century in which for the first time science and religion considered being hostile (Fuller, 2007: p.24).

During the nineteenth century, the discoveries of a new branch of science, geology, challenged the biblical estimations of the age of the world. The discovery of fossils showed that the world is far older than has

been alleged in the Bible. Initially, the English scholars who were contributing to this kind of scientific research did not find any contradiction between their Anglican beliefs and the results of the discoveries because “for them, creation stories in Genesis merely spoke figuratively of the time-spans involved in God’s plan” (MacCulloch, 2010: p. 856). But when these geological discoveries were coupled with Darwin’s theory, everything changed. Darwin believed that the different species did not come directly from the Garden of Eden but that they are the result of a long fight for survival that is the process of ‘natural selection’. Although he never called himself an ‘atheist’, Darwin’s theory became the basis of a robust atheistic tradition afterwards. Darwin published his controversial book, *On the Origin of Species*, in 1859. In subsequent decades a new set of books was published in Britain and the United States in which, for the very first time in the history of the modern world, the idea of antagonism between science and religion was theorised (Fuller, 2007: pp. 24-5). Consequently, science, atheism and the pilgrim experience at this point joined together for the first time. This type of atheism was scientific because it challenged some religious beliefs by supporting the results of Darwinism as a scientific theory. And it was a ‘pilgrimage’ because of its belief in another system of interconnected truths.

3-4. Pilgrim atheists: either scientists or admirers of science

Pilgrim atheism has been always about science, but pilgrim atheists are not necessarily scientists themselves. I will put those atheists who are not natural scientists into two categories: the *admirers of science* in philosophy, and *humanists*. Those admirers themselves are divisible

into two groups. First, those whom I, following Peter Winch, tend to call *the under-labourers of science* (Winch, 2008: pp. 4-5), like Bertrand Russell (1872-1970); and second, those who want to give purpose and direction to science, like Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Karl Marx (1818-1883). The under-labourers tend to see science as pure knowledge, and philosophy as having only the negative role of “removing the impediments” to its advancement (Winch, 2008: p. 4) because science has built on the ‘certain’ statements. This, on the contrary, is not the case for philosophy. For instance, Bertrand Russell, the author of *Why I Am Not a Christian?* (1927), believed that “we shall be wise to build our philosophy upon science, because the risk of error in philosophy is pretty sure to be greater than in science” (Russell, 2010: p. 145). Thus, other fields should not be ashamed of being the *under-labourer* of “the incomparable Mr. Newton”, as John Locke said (Winch, 2008: p. 4). Yet philosophers like Comte tended to see science as an arm for the body of their philosophy which could shape the future of humanity (Gane, 2006). So they preferred to set a goal for science from a standpoint outside it.

The majority of the second group of pilgrim atheists, the *humanists*, are those who try to apply those scientific theories (e.g. the theory of evolution) to society or history. The best case here would be Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). He tried to consider the theory of evolution for society. Then he came up with the idea of ‘social Darwinism’, though he used to write about evolution even before Darwin (Rogers, 1972: p. 266). While there were growing tendencies for such naturalistic interpretations of religion during the nineteenth century (Thrower, 2000: p.

126), there were another set of, one might say, *humanistic-pilgrim-atheistic* studies about the 'historical Jesus'. These studies used to put Jesus in his historical context in order to know him. The classic work in this field was Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1906). Most of these historical works considered Jesus a Jewish insurgent (MacCulloch, 2010: pp. 859-860). They also used to consider history as a kind of science. This was also true for Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and his psychoanalysis. He considered psychoanalysis as a science which is concerned with searching for an overwhelming law that unites and justifies everything about human behaviour. In his research he was obsessed with the myths of Judaism, his ancestral religion, and also Christianity. He concluded that the human sexual drive is that force behind varieties of appearances of human behaviour. For him love, in human behaviour, shows itself in two ways: either sexual love, or love which is a sexual desire in the human unconscious (the sublimated love). Thus, love of God is also nothing but sublimated *libido* (Nicholi, 2003: chapter 3).

3-5. Pilgrim atheists are proselytisers

To conclude, pilgrim atheism and science are interwoven with each other in their origin and in their goal. The first branch of modern atheism, which I called *pilgrim atheism*, historically depended on the nominalist image of the world as a homogenous thing which needs to be captured by a univocal language. According to that image of the world, some natural laws are there in the temple of nature to be discovered. So there are some laws in nature which explain almost everything. Pilgrim

atheism contains those ideals of scientific efforts which are targeted at the *theory of everything*. Pilgrimage is thus ascribed to the first category of atheism because it takes for granted a kind of pre-existing *truth*. For pilgrim atheists there is a clear line between right and wrong, true and false or delusion and reality. Given the clear division between true and false, pilgrim atheists, who are mostly scientists, blurred the borders between the advancement of science and the scientific reorganisation of society, as their eighteenth-century scientist forerunners did (Fuller, 2007: p. 18). In a way they have not been satisfied with their scientific achievement. They wanted science as an ideology or the new system of beliefs for modern society. Thus science became 'the true knowledge' and atheist-scientists turned into proselytisers.

4. Tourist Atheism

Earlier, I defined Prometheanism by its inversion of the relationship between God and man where man became the creator of God. That is, Prometheanism is essentially about the divinisation of man. However, while *pilgrim atheism* was the first form of modern atheism, it is not the *only form*. The other form of modern atheism which still can be categorised under Prometheanism is *tourist atheism*. Tourist atheism tries to divinise humanity by extending another aspect of the Scotist tradition. The prime trait of tourist atheism is that it relinquishes the proselytising mission by reproducing another feature of God: His *singularity*. The noble characteristic of the tourist type is its *individualism*. That is, the goal and purpose of a journey is ultimately inside each person. Everyone becomes his own God. In the consumerist world in which citizens have turned into

mere consumers, and their individual wish is prior to everything else (Milbank, 2012: p. 235), the subjective goal of atheists became egoistic pleasure. The objective world is nothing but a large, fragmented space without any hierarchical order. Any hierarchy is thus related to individual priorities. At this point, I want to suggest that this type of touristic individualism itself is rooted in the Scotist tradition. When one fully applies his individual rights and fulfils his individual priorities, one reproduces God's primary feature of *singularity*.

4-1. The ontologically isolated individual

In general, all the 'Religions of the Book' value the person. John Milbank (2012) separated the traditional 'person' from the modern 'individual' by referring to a person's position in a chain of inter-relations with others – a chain which even connects man to God. But nominalism was the beginning of the individual – a “self-sufficient sovereign entity, abstractable from his social insertion” – and following that “he is not essential to the composition of any social aggregation” (Milbank, 2012: p. 218). Milbank calls this “the ontological isolation of the individual” (Milbank, 2012). The modern isolated or atomised individual was presumed in nominalism through the doctrine of *haecceitas* (or individuation, or *this-ness*). Challenging the idea of the *universal* in its Thomistic version, Scotus tried to indicate that the cause of universality is in one's mind but the cause of singularity is in the *thing* itself (Bettoni, 1979: p. 59). To articulate the doctrine of *this-ness*, Scotus rejected the doctrine of double negations of thinkers like Henry of Ghent. Let us articulate his answer with this question. Given two persons like Plato and

Socrates, Henry of Ghent would say that they are two individuals because Plato is not Socrates and Socrates is not Plato (i.e. double negation). The individuation, for Henry of Ghent, does not need any positive assertion “because the essential characteristics of the individual are negative” (Bettoni, 1979: p. 59). For him, it would be enough to say that the individual is the *indivisible*. So, the individual is (1) not anything else and (2) is not internally divided (Bates, 2010: p. 88). In contrast, Scotus tried to defend the ‘dignity’ of the individual by saying that negation cannot be the foundation of a ‘*this*’ because negation is “of the same kind in *this* and *that*” (Bates, 2010: p. 91—*ital. mine*). Namely, in separating Plato from Socrates we are doing the same thing: *this* is not *that* (first negation) and *that* is not *this* (second negation). In this double negation, we have not stated anything positive about each individual. Scotus believed that this is absurd. What we need, according to him, is a positive principle which Scotus called the principle of *this-ness*. Thus Scotus concludes that the *this-ness* of Plato, for example, is radically different from the *this-ness* of, say, Socrates. Neither has anything in common. Therefore, *this-ness* is the ultimate reality or the authentic. What really exists in the world is the plurality of these *thisnesses* or *individuals*.

One needs to put this Scotist emphasis on the individual in the Christian context. Max Weber pointed out that ‘Religions of the Book’ have always gone against the ‘natural sib’, family and tribe¹⁶ (Weber,

¹⁶ Weber mentioned this line of the Bible as the evidence for his claim: “I came not to send peace, but a sword” – Matthew, x, 34 (Weber, 1977: p. 329). But this is also true for the Prophet of Islam who for the first time, in the Arabic peninsula of his time, raged

1977: p. 329). And it is true that the way to salvation is paved only for *individuals*. The individual possesses “greater richness” in comparison with the species (Bettoni, 1979: p. 63). But this originally nominalist tradition of obsession with the individual constituted many schools of thought in the history of modernity. Currently, Slavoj Žižek (2009) follows that line. He shows that what I called the touristic experience is a mode of seeing man created *in the image and likeness of God*. He wrote “what makes a human being ‘like God’ is not a superior or even divine quality of the human mind” – that is, Žižek rejects the basic thesis of those whom I called modern pilgrims. Žižek wants us to leave behind the motifs of a man as deficient copy of divinity. Namely, he criticises the Enlightenment reading of the *imago dei* doctrine which was demanded for God’s ‘objective’ point of view. But what Žižek wants us to be is related to another reading of the *imago dei* doctrine. His reading is based on the doctrine of *haecceitas*. The basic idea here is that we are created in the image of God in terms of being a person or being a singular entity: “It is only at the level of person, qua person, qua this abyss beyond all properties, that man is ‘in the image of God’” (Žižek, 2009: p. 30). We might wonder what the central peculiarity of the individual is for the followers of the tourist line. That is about finding the purpose and meaning exclusively inside the autonomous self which led us to a kind of *ontological-narcissism*. I will explain this answer, further, below.

against his own tribe (*Quraysh*) in Mecca and migrated to another city, Yasreb, to build a new community of believers who are mainly detached from their families. Subsequently, the city was named after him *Medinah-tun-nabi* (the City of the Prophet or in its short form Medina). In fact Medina was the first city in the history of Islam which was built upon the community of atomised individual believers and was also named after the leader of those individuals not by pointing out his name (i.e. Muhammad the son of Abdul-Ilah) but in terms of his legal personality.

4-2. No goal but a subjective one

I have mentioned in the last chapter that the separation of *will* from *reason* and giving priority to the *will* is the main characteristic of the nominalist movement of the late Middle Ages, which has no precedent whatsoever in other Abrahamic faiths. Giving priority to one's will over reason also encourages a sense of freedom for the individual – “a ‘raw’ freedom independent of ends, of which one can never be legitimately robbed” (Milbank, 2012: p. 225). This is because the individual is defined because of this *freedom*. That freedom is the authentic thing about the individual. The individual is free because he is the *sovereign* and he is the *sovereign* because he possesses *will*.

While pilgrim is the man of ultimate truth, tourist is the man of indefinite possible worlds and endless options for well-being and maximising pleasure. Bauman stated that the world for a tourist is a “do-it-yourself world” which is kneaded by the tourist's desires and wishes (Bauman, 1996: p. 30). If the world for the tourist is an infinite combination of a plurality of individuals, the chaos of radically individual beings (Gillespie, 2008: pp. 15-151) or the ‘unfathomable void’ (Žižek, 2009: p. 30), any goal and meaning will merely be subjective. It is likely that Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) was the first Renaissance figure to see the nascent form of the modern tourist personality type as the legacy of the nominalists: “human beings for Petrarch live in a chaotic world and are constantly pulled by their passions or loves in multiple directions” (Gillespie, 2008: p. 55). Not surprisingly, he believed that the only way out is to overcome this world by relying on *human will*. In one of his imaginary

conversations with Aquinas, Petrarch discovered that “there must be *will*, and that *will* must be strong and earnest that it can deserve the name *purpose*” (qtd.in Gillespie, 2008: p. 58—*ital. mine*).

Briefly, following the nominalist doctrine of *haecceitas*, the individual in its modern sense came in to existence. Then, the world became the chaos of endless individuals, each radically different from the other. The human being is also not a stable creature in such a world; rather, man is the subject of different sets of inner passions and outer forces. So, the only *Archimedean point* is the deity side of man – human will. In other words, the destination of man is considered to be inside himself. Needless to say, meaning and purpose are interwoven with each other, since if there is no purpose, there will be no meaning (Löwith, 1949: p. 6). The tourist is therefore the one who keeps the goal subjective and searches for meaning not in the temple of the universe but inside the self. Or, in other terms, the tourist is the one who constructs and distributes meaning in the world.

4-3. Tourists leisurely stroll in the temples

The final question of this chapter regards when tourism and atheism joined together. As I mentioned above, one can find the seeds of a touristic outlook in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and even among Renaissance figures such as Petrarch. But the first step toward tourist atheism was taken by a generation of thinkers after 1920, mostly in continental Europe. The story of that generation starts with Nietzsche’s assertion that ‘God is dead’. But after two World Wars, Stalinism,

Fascism and other disasters of the first half of the twentieth century, it turned out that man is also dead. The Enlightenment's humanistic hopes for a just and happy life through the new conception of humanity had apparently failed. As Adorno and Horkheimer memorably described: "the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: p. 1).¹⁷ So for this generation of atheists, the goal of atheism was not 'to overcome' religion through the divinisation of humanity, but 'to get lost' in the world without God (Geroulanos, 2010: p. 8). If humanity could neither be grounded in a relationship with God, nor with itself as a paradigmatic self, then the only option would be acknowledging the restrictions of the universe of human subjectivity and trying to inhabit in the limited realm of the individual self – an inhabitation which is equal to getting lost in the bigger world, a world which now seems far too big to be controlled by man. This was only the first step: fully-fledged tourism only came to existence after the so-called postmodern turn. Tourist atheism is radically changing the face of modern atheism by returning to religion not as the subject of faith but as a cultural legacy. That legacy can be activated once more in a secular guise.

'*Atheism 2.0*' is a term that Alain de Botton used for his version of tourist atheism, which he presents in the format of a self-help book (de Botton, 2012). He invites people to choose any aspect of the religious rituals and doctrines that suits them for their atheistic life. To wit, he invites us to deconstruct religions, and this deconstruction is based on Feuerbach's assertion that God is the projection of man's mind into the

¹⁷ Amongst whom were thinkers like Kojève, Malraux, Sartre, Beaufret and others (Geroulanos, 2010).

sky. But atheism 2.0 takes another step by asserting that religious rituals and ideas, if not *true*, were definitely not *useless*. That is, they had some functions in terms of assuaging the pains and sufferings of people – for example, it could make them feel supported by a community and then feel happier. The title ‘wisdom without doctrine’ which de Botton used for the first chapter of his book might not be very precise philosophically speaking, but it effectively encapsulates tourist atheism’s *doctrine* (see: de Botton, 2012: p. 7). Tourist atheists are not afraid of strolling in the temple of religion and treating it as a buffet full of interesting items with which to maximise their own pleasures. While the goal is subjective, anywhere in the world would be a mere spot. And philosophy, mythology, science and religion are different forms of approaching these spots. One might say this is the last step toward secularising religion: considering it as nothing more than a touristic spot.

4-4. Tourists delicately expropriate the temples

This novel strategy of the modern atheist movement – the *expropriation* of religion – is crucial to the future of modern atheism. However, although tourist atheists are different to militant atheists and do not appear that hostile to religion, one should not underestimate their ‘violence’. They are as violent as Gandhi was, as Žižek ironically argues. The point is that Gandhi was violent because he targeted the whole system of colonisation in India via non-reactionary acts such as boycotting the British cloths. But Hitler was always reactionary. That is to say, not targeting the functioning of the capitalist government, he radicalised the functions of capitalism (Žižek, 2013: p. 122). I suggest that

the tourist atheist's strategy is more similar to the former.¹⁸ They are *violent* in terms of trying delicately to *expropriate* religious rituals and sentiments. Keeping the furniture of the temple, they get rid of the priests and worshippers. Concisely, while tourist atheists are *expropriators*, pilgrim atheists are *occupiers*. After all, as has been mentioned above, pilgrim atheists *occupied* the religious concept of God by turning it into objectivism. The difference between pilgrim atheists and tourist atheists is that while pilgrims occupy *theological concepts* and abandon religious *rituals and sentiments*, tourists do it other way around – abandoning *theological concepts* and expropriating the religious *rituals and sentiments*. In other words, pilgrim atheists destroy the temple and pick up the theological ideas, while tourist atheists abide in the temple and evict the traditional inhabitants.

Needless to say, the history of human civilisation and religion is full of similar occupations and re-occupations of past doctrines and rituals. The first community of Christians at the dawn of the Middle Ages started to absorb and redefine some elements from the pagan doctrines. Not only that, but they also dwelled in some pagan rituals. After the Crusade the European Christians also used some aspects of the Islamic doctrines, while Muslims themselves did the same thing with ancient Greek ideas (cf. Blumenberg, 1983: Part I; Bala, 2006). But the significance of tourist atheism is in the conscious employing of this method. Pilgrim atheists will not accept their theoretical and structural dependence on the theological

¹⁸ I need to emphasise that, for the goal of this argument, one needs to ignore the positive reputation of Gandhi, on the one hand, and the negative reputation of Hitler, on the other. That is, I am not about to imply any value judgement about the role of tourist atheism in society.

past. They see themselves in the time of light and the realm of truth far from any 'dark ages'. Tourist atheists, conversely, start from they depend on earlier rituals. The popularity of this method might change the face of atheism, mostly through opening the doors of religion toward atheists. The significant point about tourist atheism is not the way these atheists want to take advantage of religion but the way they define themselves as *expropriators* of religion.

5. Conclusion: a new typology of modern atheisms

In this chapter, I have tried to show the insufficiency of the old division between scientific and humanistic atheisms through illustrating an atheistic movement which cannot be categorised under any of these types. Thus, we need a new typology of modern atheisms. Following Bauman's dichotomy of pilgrim and tourist experiences, I suggested the same metaphors for the new typology of modern atheisms. Both *pilgrim atheism* and *tourist atheism* are types of what I called modern Prometheanism. That is, they consider man as the creator of God not *vice versa*. And both of them (like Prometheanism itself) are the outcome of Scotists' poetic revolution in the late Middle Ages. The difference is that while pilgrim atheism is the extension of the doctrine of the primacy of the will, tourist atheism is the extension of the doctrine of *haecceitas*. The goal for pilgrim atheists is in objective scientific truth, while tourist atheists are searching for a subjective destination. This means that whilst pilgrim atheists reject religion by relying on scientific facts, newly emerged tourist atheists are not afraid of taking advantage of religious elements for the sake of individualistic goals. I also distinguished two

types of pilgrim atheists: scientists versus admirers of science. The members of both of these categories are proselytisers – trying to promote their ideas and ‘save’ other people from ‘ignorance’. Yet, tourist atheists relinquish that proselytiser purpose and try to expropriate religious rituals and sentiments. These ideas will be followed up in the chapter four and five, in which I will try to scrutinise these two categories to show modern atheistic techniques of approaching *religion* on the one side and the *public* on the other. But before that I need to answer some theoretical questions about the very act of unmasking the theology behind modern forms of unbelief.

Chapter Three

The Intellectual Deviation Story and Promethean Self-Creation

1. Introduction

Every academic attempt to unmask the historicity of a present phenomenon (e.g. the history of the constitution of the modern individual or modern state) should clearly state its analytic goal from the outset which justifies the necessity and importance of unmasking. Otherwise, the unmasking effort can easily be mistaken with the rejection of the subject or a questioning its legitimacy. In the current chapter, I want to argue for the necessity of the recognition of the historical constitution of modern atheism or unbelief in its theological context, not in order to reject it, but to distinguish its two sides. Modern Promethean unbelief, I would argue, contains two sides; *rebellion* against the transcendental and *self-creation* through mimicking the transcendental. However, Brad Gregory as a Christian historian, John Milbank as an Anglican theologian or Jean Elshtain as a Christian ethicist might all tend to reject the rebellion side of Prometheanism but, they could be agreeing with the analytically different self-creation side. Moreover, this recognition and acceptance could open up a space for the co-practice of believers and nonbelievers.

Let me begin by rewinding the story of two branches of an academic tradition. From the mid-1980s, an increasing number of historians of modernity and philosophers of religion theoretically tied the modern age more closely to their medieval precursors. Let us call this the *continuity conception* of the emergence of secularisation, in contrast with the radical break conception associated with figures such as the founding fathers of the Enlightenment. The most important contributions in the continuity story were Amos Funkenstein's *Theology and the Scientific Imagination* (1986), the classic *Passage to Modernity* (1993) by Louis Dupré and John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* (2006) and the recent *Beyond Secular Order* (2013). Nevertheless, it was Charles Taylor's eminent *A Secular Age* (2007) which gained the most popularity and established a reputation in the academic debate

The former figures focused more on what Taylor called the Intellectual Deviation story, but Taylor preferred to explain a Reform Master Narrative which is defined as an analytical, phenomenological and genealogical account of secularisation (Taylor, 2007: p773; Casanova, 2010: p. 265). The Intellectual Deviation story emphasises more the emergence of a Scotist/voluntarist theology and the parallel univocal understanding of being. That is, a theoretical approach in the Christian schools of late middle ages (Milbank, 2006 and 2013; Cunningham, 2002; Fuller, 2007 and 2011; Bague, 2007). While the Taylor's Reform¹⁹ shows how secularity emerged "as a mass phenomenon" in the larger society

¹⁹ The term 'Reform' might be confusing here. For Taylor, 'the Reformation' was merely a tiny part of a massive process of 'Reform'. The latter was a titanic movement which was begun by Axial religions and through a zig-zag and long process gradually this ended up in modernity.

(Taylor, 2007: pp. 774-5). He shows how the act of Reform, the so called 'mother of revolutions', trickled down secularity (Taylor, 2007: pp. 61 and 775). So while the Intellectual Deviation story understands secularisation as something which emerged historically firstly among the elites of the society, Taylor tends more toward its socio-historical manifestations.

In the epilogue of *A Secular Age*, Taylor explains that he has great sympathy with Milbank's Intellectual Deviation account but yet believes that it hardly can be the main story behind secularity. The main story concerns not only mere disenchantment but also the discipline of and reordering of society. Additionally, Taylor sees two stories of Intellectual Deviation and Reform Master Narrative as complementary and explaining the same phenomenon from different directions (Taylor, 2007: p. 775). Milbank, for his part, and in total agreement with Taylor, says that Intellectual Deviation is by no means the most fundamental account of secularisation. Furthermore, he acknowledges that Taylor's account deals with the more essential issue of the "fusion of ideas and practice" (Milbank, 2009: p. 100) which indeed is the 'mother of revolutions'. Without such a fusion any theoretical and intellectual upheaval in isolation of either academia or religious circles will not be effective. Milbank brilliantly summarises the difference between those two accounts of the emergence of secularisation: "We [i.e. those who work on the Intellectual Deviation story] are saying that over-piety paradoxically undermines theology; he [Taylor] is saying that hyper-reform of the laity paradoxically undermines belief" (Milbank, 2009: p. 100). The former concerns elites,

the latter concerns mostly the socio-historical processes²⁰. Milbank hopes for an upcoming and “*still more* adequate account of secularisation” which is going to bridge together Taylor’s social approach and the Radical Orthodoxy’s elitist standpoint “in terms of exactly how scholastic theology related to disciplinary, pastoral and legal practice” (Milbank, 2009: p. 101). This shows that the continuity conception is still considered to be an unfinished project which is waiting for its masterpiece to appear in the future.

Nevertheless, so far, the common ground between the two approaches is that both see the story of *Christianity undoing itself* behind secularisation. To reveal this backstage, both also adopt a genealogical narrative which recognises the importance of the nominalist theology as the point of departure. Taylor and Milbank’s mutual confirmations show that from this perspective there is something revolutionary about nominalism that needs more emphasis especially regarding the constitution of what Taylor called the modern forms of unbelief. What is that revolutionary idea? To answer this question I will review the segments of Taylor’s *A Secular Age* which address the shared elements with the Intellectual Deviation story.

There are a series of questions that we need to answer in this regard. Are the modern forms of atheism, and more generally unbelief, *rooted* in the theological doctrines or *shaped* by them? Are they

²⁰ There is a yet more sociological and leftist criticism of both of these approaches that emphasises the importance of “historical *forces* conditioning and contouring secularism that do not take shape primarily as ideas or explicit human aims” (Brown, 2010: p. 89—*ital.* Original). This would be the thrust of Marx’s classic critique of religion (Brown, 2010: 83ff). But again, it does not seem that either Milbank, Taylor or any of the above-mentioned scholars would oppose the existence of those historical forces entirely.

extensions of the past or even stronger *pre-determined* by it? Let us ask this question in another way, what are the implications of unmasking the theological unconscious of atheism?²¹ So far I have made it clear that by the theological past I mean the Scotist/nominalist school of the late middle ages. So the underlying question would be, why single out that moment in the history of Christianity and not for instance Italian Renaissance humanism, the age of the Reformation or Spinozistic pantheism?

This chapter contains two interconnected arguments: As Funkenstein suggested: “The “new” often consists not in the invention of new categories or new figures of thought, but rather in a surprising employment of existing ones” (1986: p. 14). In other words, the core argument of the continuity conception would be that the new is the new order of the old ideas, doctrines, concepts, practices and so on. So far, most of the main figures of the continuity conception have focused on the elitist side of the story. I will try to show why the elitist/nominalist side of the story is still relevant and important—but nevertheless incomplete.

Secondly, living in what Taylor called an ‘immanent frame’, we should recognise the existence of the Promethean unbelief as an option in modern society which rejects the existence of the transcendental. One however might not choose this option and might instead be able to see the other side of modern Prometheanism. Beside the rejection of the transcendental, modern Prometheanism has another aspect which is the

²¹ Gillespie on the one hand would argue that the present is *rooted* in the past (see: Gillespie, 2008). Gregory on the other hand used the term extension. The present is the *extension* and *continuation* of the past (see: Gregory, 2012: p. 383). Yet, Taylor wrote that the past *sediments* in the present (Taylor, 2007: p. 268).

emphasis on self-formation, self-actualisation and self-creation. I would argue that the second aspect of Prometheanism is a common place for the possible interaction and co-practice of both believers and unbelievers in the immanent frame. So Prometheanism contains two sides of *rebellion* against the transcendent and *self-formation* by mimicking the transcendent. The latter option of re-making the self (and subsequently society) allows the believers and unbelievers not to focus on the mere rejection of other options but on co-practice and, through this, going beyond the imposed dichotomies. I would suggest that to formulate this second aspect of Prometheanism inevitably we need still to refer to the elitist, theological and Scotist side of the story.

2. Why single out Scotist theology

Why do we need to single out Scotism as a point of departure in a genealogical study of modernity? Let me begin with an unexpected example. It has been said that Wahhabism is undermining the Islamic heritage by its crude violence. One can draw a parallel between the recent and controversial Wahhabism in the Islamic world and some branches of Franciscanism (and later on Puritanism) of Christianity of the late middle ages. Wahhabism has turned Islam into a monotheistic religion which does not allow any sacramental mediation. It has made a radical break between the natural and supernatural, because it is against most of the rituals, pilgrimage (except Haj), religious arts, and theologically inspired architecture etc. Hence the destruction of historical and even holy sites by the radicals which is already part of the upsetting everyday news coming from the Arab world and parts of North Africa.

What remains after the gradual dismantling of these mediations, Milbank believes, is an “impermeable, drained, meaningless immanence” that can very easily be detached from any transcendental (2009: p. 94). So in a way, Wahhabism is not only a danger to modern Islamic societies but also to those very Islamic teachings and traditional rituals. This theological tendency to detach the natural from the transcendental can also be the very point of singling out Scotist theology among all the former and latter events. It was, arguably, the beginning of the process of detaching God from the universe by assuming His will prior to even His own former decisions. An unpredictable wilful God who creates on a moment to moment basis and does not care even about being just to His creatures is someone who lives beyond the cosmos and is not attached to it in any recognisable way. This mode of theology was begun by Duns Scotus (Oberman, 1983).

2.1. Getting subtraction stories out of the way

Consider Taylor’s take on this point. He also begins his genealogical narrative with a reference to the Scotist theology. Nevertheless, before getting into that debate, he dedicates a noticeable part of his *A Secular Age* to challenging what he calls ‘subtraction stories’. His main question is: “why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?” (Taylor, 2007: p. 25). How did we get to the point of thinking about the plurality of alternative options of belief and unbelief? Today Westerners cannot naively believe in one option and think of it as the only possibility anymore. The ‘fullness’,

as Taylor calls it, takes several forms and this is an unavoidable awareness of anyone who lives in the modern world. The first step to positively explain this condition of plurality of options is to reject different versions of 'subtraction stories' which are:

...stories of modernity in general, and secularity in particular, which explain them by human beings having lost, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge. What emerges from this process—modernity or secularity—is to be understood in terms of underlying features of human nature which were there all along, but had been impeded by what is now set aside. (Taylor, 2007: p. 22)

These stories, including most of the main stream secularisation theories, presuppose that the secular was hidden and suppressed under the religious illusions (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen, 2011: p. 11). So by erosion of those illusions the secular as the *authentic* and *normal* state of being emerged once more. Take the case of the modern individual. According to those subtraction stories, all of us are primarily, by essence and nature, individuals who are, secondarily, associated in society for our mutual benefit. Thus according to these subtraction stories we just need to liberate ourselves from the 'old horizons' and imposed conceptions of sociality. Then "the mutual service conception of order" would be "the obvious alternative" and "the evident residual idea" which remains after the erosion of the long-standing metaphysics (Taylor, 2007: p. 169). That was theorised in the social

contract theory of Grotius and Locke. The new picture of the society depicted individuals who ‘come together’ and make a political entity against the pre-existed ones and so on (Taylor, 2007: p. 159). Nevertheless, this self-congratulatory story of liberation ignores the fact that modernity also contains “the rise of new principles of sociality” (Taylor, 2007: p. 169).

If we look at modern individuality or individual-in-itself from the point of view of the subtraction stories, it might seem that the individual-in-itself has always existed until the Christian illusion suppressed it. Another relevant branch of the subtraction theory narrates the same story about nature. As if the ancients knew something called ‘pure nature’ in the modern sense of the term; that is a nature which is governed by forces of physics and so on. So, the subtraction story goes on, the idea of the supernatural was something imposed on it by Christians. That is a supernatural idea which stands on the top of that pure nature. While we know that this was not the case (Hadot, 2002; Milbank, 2013: p. 6). What we can find among the thinkers of antiquity rather was a concept of the ‘extensive self’ in unity with nature. That is an individual which belongs to a universal order. “The *Kosmos* included humans as an integral though unique part of itself” which “prevented [the individual] from being the philosophical and moral ultimate” in itself (Dupré, 1993: p. 94). The Aristotelian soul, for instance, was a biological concept and so part of physics. However, the human mind, which enters the soul, after death “returns to its own universality” (Dupré, 1993: p. 94). So, there were an organic unity between human beings and nature in a general sense of the

term—hence the cosmos. Therefore, from the point of view antiquity either nature or the individual in an ontological isolation were almost inconceivable. So again, how did the modern *double detachment* of the transcendental being from the cosmic-human side, on the one hand, and the individual from the cosmos, on the other, take place?

Taylor's method of getting the subtraction stories out of the way was partly by what he might call telling a story about the emergence of modernity. By giving a historical/genealogical account of the history of modernity we can explain how the secular was positively invented (Casanova, 2010: p. 265). His phenomenological account of the conditions of belief and unbelief also explains the role of Christianity in the Western process of secularisation. He tries to show that we became secular "not *against* religion but *because* of religion" (Mendieta, 2012b: p. 307). This is a narrative that cannot be grasped through subtraction stories. The critique of the secular from this perspective has an increasing effect on social theory and was the motivation behind some pioneering theoretical efforts in this regard (cf. Joas, 2014; Warner, VanAntwerpen and Calhoun, 2010). Calhoun for example continues this line of argument by saying that:

Secularism is often treated as a sort of absence. It's what's left if religion fades. It's the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. But then it is seen as somehow in itself neutral. This is misleading. We need to see secularism as a presence. It is something, and therefore not entirely neutral,

and in need of elaboration and understanding. (2012: p. 335)

If we are not interested in the story of the rise of the secular age in terms of subtraction stories of vanishing religious illusions, then we need a positive story about the double detachment (of the transcendental being and the cosmos on the one hand, and also the human being and cosmos, on the other hand). Taylor's alternative story (Reform Master Narrative) is closely related to the emergence of 'exclusive and self-sufficient humanism'. And here Taylor sees 'important Christian motives' at work (Taylor, 2007: p. 26). We should, Taylor suggests, put that sort of humanism in the context of the originally nominalist description of the world.

2.2. Nominalist description of the world

The Intellectual Deviation story of Milbank and Fuller are very similar to Taylor's take. The difference is rather between different points of emphasis. From one perspective, there are three main themes of interpretation of the nominalist theology. Firstly Milbank, as discussed in the other chapters, tends more toward the emphasis on the very foundational metaphysical premises of nominalism. The most important of which is the univocity of being. The premise of univocity, as Milbank defines, is "a decision against a middle in *being*, between identity and difference" (2013: p. 51, *ital.* Original). That is to say, it was a radical rejection of the Aquinas' doctrine of analogy as something between 'identity' and 'difference'. For instance, Aquinas could argue that man represents God in the world which means that on the one hand, man is

not God and on the other hand, they are not totally incomparable. We can, instead, make an analogy between the two. Scotus and Ockham, however, rejected this middle ground. For them, two beings are either the same in existence, or totally different. Fuller's version of the Intellectual Deviation story, though, puts more emphasis on the anthropological consequence of the univocal conception of the human being and his power of creativity, gaining objective knowledge, control of nature, etc. Fuller's emphasis is on the nominalist interpretation of the biblical idea of *imago dei*. So, the univocity of being was a prerequisite of putting God and man on one spectrum of existence (Fuller, 2011 and 2014). I have discussed these two themes in depth in the previous chapters of the thesis.

Finally, Taylor and Dupré place an emphasis on the nominalist radical detachment of the natural from the supernatural. We can explain radical detachment in terms of the idea of exclusive humanism. It is reasonable to say that some sort of understanding of human flourishing did exist in all pre-Abrahamic religions. That is to say, people were appealing to divinities and were asking for health, safety, and prosperity etc. Yet it was in unity and harmony with the cosmos. Christianity's contribution was to define a form of self-flourishing which can go beyond the cosmos. This is closely related to the doctrines of salvation. In other words, a sort of 'flourishing in a wider scale' was presumed which also rejected the idea that tribal, social or personal flourishing is the highest goal of humanity (Taylor, 2007: p. 153). The idea of individual salvation fundamentally detached the person from society, tribe and community.

Everyone is equal in the eyes of a transcendental God of Abraham. As Dupré puts it, this detachment was ‘the essence of personhood’ (Dupré, 1993: p. 95). Now, what is unprecedented about modern humanism is ‘the flourishing of individual’ without any connection to higher beings (Taylor, 2007: p. 151). Where does this phenomenon come from?

Among the post-Axial religions, according to Taylor, it was Christianity’s attempt to ‘willed re-making of society’ that ended up in the idea of the self-flourishing individual. This also was a multi-tracked and multi-layered process (Taylor, 2007: p. 155-6). In any case, it was pressure from within Christianity which broke the ‘great chain of being’ and detached a sovereign God from the rest of the world.

At the beginning of a chapter on the rise of the ‘disciplinary society’, when Taylor writes about *shifting descriptions of the world*, he writes: “This begins with the nominalist revolution against the reigning, Thomistic idea of autonomy of nature” (2007: p. 97). For Aquinas, God was a guarantee for the intelligibility of the world. Nevertheless, with the emergence of a nominalist God which is detached from the cosmos because of His unbounded free will, medieval thought experienced a crisis of intelligibility of the world. With nominalism what was missing, Elshtain shows, ‘the dialogic dimension of God’s sovereign power’ (Elshtain, 2008: p. 35).

Yet in his discussion about the *immanent frame* Taylor reconfirms the importance of the nominalist detachment of natural and supernatural as a point of departure.

[T]he irony is, that this clear distinction of natural from supernatural, which was an achievement of Latin Christendom in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, was originally made in order to mark clearly the autonomy of the supernatural. The rebellion of the “nominalists” against Aquinas’ “realism” was meant to establish the sovereign power of God, whose judgments made right and wrong, and could not be chained by the bent of “nature”. Likewise the Reformers did everything they could to disentangle the order of grace from that of nature. (Taylor, 2007: p. 542)

For Taylor, ‘the immanent frame’ which originated from the constant attempts to detach the sovereign God from the world does not negate God. It pushes God into the realm of the supernatural. Consequently, He, the divine, cannot remain the only subject of belief in an immanent frame. In this case, we can compare Taylor’s *A Secular Age* with Brad Gregory’s *The Unintended Reformation* (2012). Gregory draws a similar picture; there is a world “desacramentalised and denuded of God’s presence” which has appeared via metaphysical univocity doctrine and Ockam’s razor. Therefore, the nature:

...would cease to be either the Catholic theatre of God’s grace or the playground of Satan as Luther’s *princeps mundi*. Instead, it would become so much raw material awaiting the imprint of human desires. (Gregory, 2012: p. 57)

Dupré adds that during this process, that not only was nature reduced to raw material but also the others were considered as objects (Dupré, 1993: p. 119). The new metaphysics, in the last analysis, detaches man from the world and both of them from the higher beings. Throughout Taylor, Gregory and Dupré's complex and erudite books one can find this picture of the world. Immanent frame, the useful phrase that Taylor coins, for instance, concerns the latter detachment of the natural order from the above. The immanent frame constitutes a natural order in contrast to the supernatural one. This immanence encompasses all the ideas of 'disciplined individual', instrumental rationality and secular time (Taylor, 2007: p. 542).

Taylor believes that the secular age is an age in which our practical self-understanding has gone through profound changes (2007: p. 542). Our self-understanding constitutes as a result of a series of responses to the questions such as 'how we fit into the world or into society'. Either religious or irreligious, Taylor suggests, we share the *practical* self-understanding that we are in a self-sufficient immanent constellation of orders: cosmic, social and moral (2007: p. 543). That is to say, these orders are understood on their own without reference to the intervention of the outside.

So, to answer the question about the analytic importance of singling out the late middle age nominalist theology as a point of departure, we can say that it depicts and describes a picture of the world which was the very first precedence of an immanent frame; a detached world from the transcendental. The point is that this detachment is an

irresistible analytically explanatory period in history of the West which has been emphasised in the Intellectual Deviation story, for instance thinkers of Radical Orthodoxy (Milbank, 2006; Cunningham, 2002). It is certainly not the whole of the story (or even its most important part) but it makes a useful point of departure for a genealogical research about the constitution of the immanent frame (Vanheeswijck, 2015: p. 131).

From this perspective, we can divide between three general periods of the history of the West: firstly, the ancient seeking perfection through unity and harmony with the cosmos. Secondly, the introduction of the idea of perfection through individual contact with a higher being beyond nature. Finally, the nominalist radicalisation of the ontological distinction between the higher being and nature-- with all of its unintended consequences in what Taylor calls the 'long march' of history which cannot be summarised in a few pages. But Taylor emphasises that one needs a genealogical study to show the process of 'the long march', not a subtraction story about a hidden human essence or nature which was waiting there to be discovered.

3. The new order of the old

The second question was about the extent to which the modern unbelief is affected by the theological past. Taylor argued that all forms of modern unbelief are *marked* by that religious origin. That is to say, we can recognise the process of *sedimentation* of the past in the present (Taylor, 2007: p. 268). Furthermore, he connected his thesis to the idea of unbelief having been defined as an 'achievement of rationality' to overcome 'the irrationality of belief'. This achievement is clearly related to

a historical awareness or a historical narrative which shows the process of victory over the irrationality. For the same reason, Taylor argued, unbelief cannot explain itself except through some sort of reference to the past (Taylor, 2007: pp. 298-9). So in the modern times, every attempt to redefine or recover belief will unavoidably refer to path-breaking exclusive humanism. So belief also needs unbelief as an opposite to define itself.

As Taylor suggests, the past *sediments* in the present. But it does not determine or shape the present. That is to say, I would argue, we cannot explain the present *only* and *merely* by reference to the past. But, at the same time, to escape from self-congratulatory stories about our achievements we need these genealogical studies which unmask the precedence of the present consciousness. Below I will argue that in general, following Funkenstein, we can say that the new is the surprising and novel order of the old ideas, doctrines, and practices etc. Nevertheless, before going further the importance of this discussion needs to be addressed.

3.1. Why should we talk about the origins?

In brief, the idea of theological origins becomes important for the researcher's particular analytic goal. The goal of this thesis is to show the historicity of modern forms of atheism and consider a new possibility of dialogue between believers and unbelievers. Taylor's goal, however, is to challenge the mainstream secularisation theories for one important misreading of history which is also one of the obstacles in the process of dialogue between belief and unbelief (Vanheeswijck, 2015: p.141). This is what has been defined above as a 'subtraction story' and its main branch,

the theory of secularisation. So the differentiation between the secular, the theory of secularisation, secularism, unbelief and atheism is crucial in our discussion as well.

The secular is a modern epistemic category which in its original form implied some sort of neutrality (Calhoun, 2012: p. 335). During its historical constitution in Western Europe, it was a cognitive reaction to the religious wars through assuming a cognitive place for non-division over the metaphysical questions. So, it gradually turned into a 'residual category' or what remains at the end when one gets over religious disputes (Casanova, 2011: p. 55). Secularism, however, refers vaguely to a series of ideologies and worldviews concerning religion. Casanova distinguishes two meanings of secularism as statecraft and secularism as an ideology. So the former, is about some principles of state impartiality vis-à-vis religions, while the latter refers to an ideology which determines and defines what religion is or is not (Casanova, 2011: p. 66). Secularisation, nevertheless, is "an analytical conceptualisation of modern world historical processes" (Casanova, 2011: p. 54). The theory of secularisation contains at least three aspects of the institutional separation of the Church and state, the theory of progressive decline of religion and finally the privatisation of religion as a prerequisite for democratic politics (Casanova, 2011: p. 60). Taylor's critique of subtraction stories could be directed at any of these concepts but it mainly concerns the theory of secularisation. It is because in his genealogical study he prefers to give an alternative history and conceptualisation of the modern world historic course. For this goal, he

also distinguishes between secularity 1 (divorce of religion and state), secularity 2 (the increasing lack of the popularity of religious belief) and secularity 3 which he defines as a move from a society in which the belief in God is unchallenged to a society in which it is not the easiest option on the table (Taylor, 2007: p. 20). This last division is possibly a controversial one but it serves Taylor's arguments well (Butler, 2010: p. 195ff). Finally, unbelief is even more of a problematic term. In a way this refers to the lack of belief in general which is not Taylor's intention. By this term he means the lack of belief in religion. Otherwise, Taylor states and acknowledges that atheism and other forms of unbelief also necessarily contain some forms of faith. This term is perhaps the best to use in that context because it refers to all forms of non-religious faith; atheism, agnosticism, scepticism, etc.

So let us take a look at Taylor's main critical target, that is. theories of secularisation. It is interesting to note that all three aspects of the secularisation theory (political separation, religious decline and privatisation of religion) were originally founded on what Peter Sloterdijk called *ideology critique*. The genealogical unmasking of the historicity of our current options is necessary because of the existence of the polemical strategies which have been used in all branches of the theory of secularisation. Sloterdijk's classic *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987) addresses this issue.

In that book, which gave him an astonishing popularity in post-war Germany, Sloterdijk criticised several enlightenment forms of 'ideology critique'. He argued that Enlightenment figures' primary failure to make a

dialogue with the opponents has been channelled into the critique of an 'archenemy' inside the people's minds; that is *prejudice*. In this way, the opponents (mostly the Church but also religious people) turned into 'cases' while their consciousness was an object of critique (Sloterdijk, 1987: p. 15). "*Ideology critique means the polemical continuation of the miscarried dialogue through other means*" (Sloterdijk, 1987: p. 15—*ital. Original*). It was not only a sincere attempt to find the truth but a combination of strategies of struggle. Sloterdijk intended to expose some of those strategies. The most important of them is the critique of religious illusion. Here enlightenment adopted two main strategies. It, firstly, reversed the 'image relationship' between God and man in Christianity. That is to say, God did not created man in his image and likeness, as the bible claims. Conversely, man has created God in his own image. The second strategy was the theory of priest deception. However, most of the subjects of the enlightenment critique were considered to be naïve because of their illusions and errors, this was not the case for the priests. They were equally intelligent and deceptive; hence the theory of priests' deception (Sloterdijk, 1987: p. 28). The final result of this double-critique was a two sided explanation of the existence of religions: "for the enlightener, it is easy to say why religion exists: first, to cope with existential fears, and second, to legitimate oppressive social orders" (Sloterdijk, 1987: p. 29). This simple formulation, Sloterdijk believes, found its proper and complex forms in the works of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche (Sloterdijk, 1987: p. 29).

Taylor's 800-page-long effort *to show the historicity of our current options* and Calhoun's insistence on considering the secular as a *presence* (not a mere absence) are only two forms of challenging the underlying simplistic presuppositions of the theories of secularisation. Those are the presuppositions which have survived even in our time. Thus Taylor or Calhoun's theses are not favours to the religious side, but *an attempt to get a miscarried dialogue back on the rails*. This attempt (which begins by questioning the neutrality of the secular) needs an alternative historical narrative (or as Taylor prefers; story) which backs the fundamental presupposition by showing the historical constitution of the secular. Thus the secular needs to be treated as an *invention* which has emerged at some point in human history. It also evolved in certain ways and thus found different forms. So unlike the alleged neutrality, it is open to change and evolution. Thus, we can separate two main reasons for the genealogical unmasking of the theological unconscious of modernity: first to show the historicity of the current options and secondly the opening up a space for dialogue (see chapter 10).

3.2. The new is the new order

Now we should address the question about the extent to which modern unbelief is affected by the theological past. In his discussion about freedom as 'one of the leading concepts of Western thought', Dupré gave an example which helps me to explain my argument. My argument was that the past lives in the present because the new can be considered as the new order (Funkenstein, 1986: p. 14) or the 'profound

rearrangement' (Elshtain, 2008: p. 39) of the formerly existing phenomena.

I would explain my example by a quick recap of Ockham's argument about God and His relationship with man. The 'free creation' for Ockham meant that God has created the world by choice and the world exists because God preserves it through His continuous support in every single moment. In other words, God's absolute sovereign power is not intrinsically limited by anything. He always has an option of not creating the world in the next moment. However, he does not exercise this power, because he loves us. Yet, it is necessary to acknowledge that possibility and power. So God's rationality coincides with his creativity i.e. logos. So there is not any rationality outside God's creativity. Rationality, in other words, is what humans call what God has done. This creates certain cognitive expectations on our side, for example, the world tomorrow will be the same as the world today. This is where faith is embedded in the Ockhamist theological argument. God does what he wants and we do what we want. All being well, these two sorts of divine and earthly actions are going to coincide at some point. Otherwise, the creatures are evidently going to pay the price. So, God is truly free. This was the nominalist beginning of the formerly discussed detachment of nature and the supernatural. Nevertheless, Dupré was concerned with the effects of this conception on human freedom. One of the immediate consequences was in law. When the lawgiver is not abiding by the intrinsic rationality of the law, the consequent legal order will be voluntaristic. So the universe is not reflecting a predictable and yet-to-be-discovered order. Dupré

suggested that we cannot be reductionist about this. Nominalism does not explain all the early modern philosophies of individualism. Nevertheless, it definitely contributed in the constitution of the idea of freedom as self-choice (Dupré, 1993: p. 123). Jean Bethke Elshtain (2008) has followed this line of argument in more detail and I will write about this in the next section. For now, we need to focus on Dupré's interesting example which he finds in the works of Shakespeare.

The self-creative godlike quality of freedom which has transmitted to human beings through the formerly discussed *imago dei* doctrine is the key here. We can see this unprecedented concept in the works of Shakespeare's remarkable tragedies (Hamlet, Julius Caesar and Macbeth) and in comparison with Greek tragedies.

[Shakespear's] protagonists no longer struggle with fate or supernatural powers but with the awesome responsibility of having to shape their own lives without being able to predict the consequences. (Dupré, 1993: p. 125)

Furthermore, John Owen makes a connection between Hamlet and Prometheus by calling them 'the dramas of free-thought'. Hamlet like Prometheus and Job was a victim [of the] inevitable clash between the finite and the infinite. Both are also similar in representing human right against the arbitrary tyranny (Qtd. in Williamson, 2013: pp. 204-5).

Let me explain the new order in this way: the concept of the individual existed before Shakespeare. A concept of God, higher being and freedom also existed. The ideas of fate and the clash of infinity with

finiteness also appeared in many tragedies before Hamlet. But what makes this protagonist a unique character in world literature was the unique combination and discipline of these conceptions. That is to say, the human is endowed with the infinite freedom and autonomy previously attributed to God who, at least in Christianity, is a transcendental being beyond cosmos. Thus, an unlimited and godlike freedom of choice has been attributed to the individual. Accordingly, the tragedy appears in a new shape. Hamlet is oppressed by the ruling powers of the very universe that he intended to change.

The new age gives primacy to the individual. Using Taylor's terms; the social imaginary, "the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings", has been reordered around the individual (Taylor, 2007: pp. 171-2 and 210). We can also think about this in terms of historical evolution of social hierarchies. The Europe of feudalism was a hierarchical society. This means that, the Lord was represented by the king and the monarchy was a representation of God's absolute power on earth. The modern society, in contrast, gives that absolute power to the citizen which is a 'direct' notion. That is to say, a citizen is related to the rest of the society directly, not by the mediation of an external institution or person (Taylor, 2007: p. 210). So, again the notions of individual, sovereignty and society have been reordered in a new and innovative way.

How does this constant process of reordering happen? I have made it clear that any answer to this should be historical and genealogical. I would like to adopt two interconnected pragmatist

intellectual positions in this regard; the first one here and the next in the following section.

The first pragmatist argument to which I want to refer is Richard Rorty's thesis about the creativity of imagination. Rorty's version of neo-pragmatism is defined in opposition with correspondence theory. According to that theory, truth is the result of the correspondence between representations in our minds and outside reality (Rorty, 1982; Malachowski, 1992). But Rorty fundamentally rejected the idea of a mind which is like a cinema with successive representations of the images of reality on its screen (Rorty, 2007b: p. 113). To break that image, he subtly connected his intellectual position with Romanticism. For Romantics, such as Shelley, imagination is "the source of freedom because it is the source of language" (Rorty, 2007b: p. 114). There is a common sense understanding of poetry which goes like this: we as children master a language first, and then in the second level, we will learn how to use the words and concepts in an imaginative and creative way to make poems. Rorty, following the Romantics, argued that "imaginativeness goes all the way back. The concepts of redness and roundness are as much imaginative creations as those of God, of the positron, and of constitutional democracy" (Rorty, 2007b: p. 114). So, in the widest sense of the term we are all poets because we use language in creative ways on a daily basis. We learn it through creating it. Thus in this way, language does not represent or correspond to reality but creates it.

Consequently, poetry in the general sense of the term contains prose as well. From this perspective "[g]etting the word "red" into

circulation was a feat on a par with Newton's persuading people to start using the term "gravity" (Rorty, 2007b: p. 114). Heidegger, Newton and Blake were all poets because they were creative. This type of conception of society joins two static and dynamic parts (the existing order and its constant re-creation by people) through focusing on the creativeness of language. So finally, the new is the new, imaginative, surprising and novel usage of the old concepts and ideas in language. Then it would be easy to make the connection between this type of conception of language and Taylor's social imaginaries as the people's images of their own life. Those images do not exist there outside; they are created, re-created, amended and re-used on the daily basis.

When we are talking about *theological origins*, we need to consider the fact that this does not refer to any authentic and original moment in history that shaped and determined modernity. Concerning our discussion, none of the modern forms of unbelief are 'mere representations of what has happened in late Middle Ages'. We can only argue for *analytically significant moments* in the long history of the evolution of orders. Choosing such a point for any genealogy (or story) is unavoidable, but we need to be careful not to overextend it. For that reason, Milbank, Taylor and Dupré cautioned about the overextension of such historical arguments and the flawed presupposition of an overly substantial period in history (Dupré, 1993: p. 124; Taylor, 2007; Milbank, 2009). To answer the formerly discussed question about the extent to which a modern phenomenon is affected by the past, I can conclude that

the new means the new (however still evolving) order of the old. This leads me to my final argument.

4. Uses of Genealogy

A Taylorian secular society in which spiritual fullness takes varieties of forms (and also cannot be arbitrarily and radically altered according to one single option) needs the reconsideration of co-practice. The thrust of the argument here is that the unavoidable multiplicity of options implies that achieving an overlapping consensus and synchronising our understandings of truth over the main issues is increasingly challenging (see chapter nine). The realm of co-practice and co-training would let us get over either religious or atheist triumphalism. I would suggest that modern Prometheanism contains two sides of *rebellion* and *self-creation*. To make this distinction and use the latter as a common ground for the co-practice of believer and unbeliever alike, the reconsideration of the Intellectual Deviation story is necessary. Following Unger, I would suggest that the pragmatist idea of *experimentalism*, which can be deduced from the Intellectual Deviation story, contains various conceptions that are necessary; if we want to cope with the crises of the modern age.

So where do we need to begin? The past section illustrated an image of what can be dubbed 'the plasticity of social life' (Unger, 2007: p. 190) or 'liquidity of society' (Bauman, 2000). To take these themes further, the final question would be *what to do next?* Concerning the genealogical description of the origins of modernity (and modern unbelief) there was an overwhelming consensus among both the figures of the

Intellectual Deviation story (Milbank, Pickstock and Cunningham) and those who are closely connected to their genealogical study (Taylor, Gregory, Elshtain and Dupré). For instance, they all believe that the nominalist theology is a suitable point of departure for the narrative. Both also believe that the essential and noteworthy nominalist idea was the radical detachment of the natural from the supernatural. Nevertheless, there is a profound disagreement among these intellectuals regarding the question of the next step which is the *use* of the genealogical study of modernity. This is the moment when diverging analytic goals become important.

There are three main themes of using the Intellectual Deviation genealogy: The first theme is about the goal of revealing and unmasking the historical background of one of today's options; for example, the 'pro-choice' movement for Jean Bethke Elshtain (2008). For instance, the underlying question of Elshtain's study was: how the sovereignty of God has shifted to the state and the self? The second response would be for those who are mostly disappointed and saddened by the failure of the former political experiences and ideological projects of the past century, that is, Nazism, Communism and Liberalism. Löwith and Gregory, for example, tended toward the pessimistic interpretations of the past and a distrustful approach to the future. Their question was: what went wrong that we got here? The last category of responses, though, is for those who are actively trying to answer to the questions of what to do and what can we make of the present options. Blumenberg and Fuller fall under the latter category. I also tend towards, and want to argue for, the last way of

using the Intellectual Deviation story. The main argument of the last group becomes explicit in comparison with two other types of argument.

4.1. Elshtain's unmasking

As for the first theme, Elshtain tended to use the Intellectual Deviation story to show the background of the emergence of the so-called 'pro-choice' movement (Elshtain, 2008). In her genealogy, she followed a trend in modern politics which was begun by Ockham's voluntaristic conception of God's sovereignty. "Ockham's individualist ontology, combined with the divine-command argument, extends and magnifies a vision of God's awesome power" (Elshtain, 2008: p. 39). She added:

If God's sovereignty is cast voluntaristically, so, too, is political authority: A command-obedience theory of secular rule takes hold. This involves a profound rearrangement of the furniture of moral and political argumentation. (Elshtain, 2008: p. 39)

For instance, breaking with the Medieval Christian ontology, Jean Bodin (1530–1596), the French political philosopher, believed that the basis of the state is *force* not justice. Without the king there would be chaos which is evil. So a king who protects the order is a necessary and unique 'supreme force' (Elshtain, 2008: p. 54). Thus, the 'overarching secular authority' inherited the temporal power of the church as well. This type of political voluntarism was an end to the Thomistic synthesis of reason and faith. One cannot be loyal to two authorities because the

divided loyalty causes self-destruction. Thus the chant of the nominalist politics would be 'there must be one' (Elshtain, 2008: pp. 74-5).

Elshtain connects that nominalist background to the modern ideologies of the past century. "In the twentieth century, transcendence was promised by fascist, communist, and other 'totalizing' projects" (Elshtain, 2008: p. 205). She believed that when the sky was emptied from any sort of transcendental truth, the transcendence "infused into immanence, experienced on the horizontal level as we became godlike" (Elshtain, 2008: p. 205). Thus, the idea of 'radical self-transcendence' has appeared regarding society as well as nature which contains the rhetoric of mastery, control, domination, triumph over and even torture (as Francis Bacon used the term regarding nature). From there she moved toward unmasking the nominalist idea of self-sovereignty and mastery of nature behind respectively abortion and eugenics. Eugenics, on the one hand, is an attempt to control nature through designing the sorts of people who are going to be part of our world (Elshtain, 2008: p. 205). Abortion, on the other, is no longer considered to be a tragedy. It instead is a way of controlling the 'flawed nature'. Therefore, "[o]verall, it becomes a story of 'us', the forces of control and perfection, against 'them', the forces of randomness and imperfection" (Elshtain, 2008: p. 209). She, as a Christian philosopher, obviously did not favour this rearrangement of concepts around the individual decision and sovereignty over one's body/foetus, nature and society, which is understandable; the eugenics projects have always been criticised by the Church, however the rest of the Abrahamic religions (i.e. Judaism and Islam) have shown more

flexibility regarding the issue (cf. Sandel, 2005: pp. 196-210). This, though, is not the case for abortion. All of the traditional religions are clearly against it. So, it is evident that Elshtain could not be agreeing with either of them.

The first underlying dichotomy that Elshtain put forward was the dichotomy of perfection against randomness. Broadly conceived, she was on the side of natural randomness. The deeper dichotomy, nevertheless, is between 'seeking perfection' against 'gaining maturity'. The recent dichotomy suggests the necessity of taming the sovereign self. So just like any other taming, her plan contained putting some limits on sovereignty. We can do that, she suggested, by defining sovereignty with responsibility. So the idea of maturity here did not contain only the positive element of trusting one's own either reason or godlike power, rather it has been defined by responsibility. Any sense of responsibility comes with restrictions and limitations for the sake of mutuality. One is responsible *in relation with* others with diverging demands and benefits etc. Thus one becomes mature 'in a relationship' and 'with others' and through putting some limits on his or her demands. *Mutuality*, Elshtain argued, would define the final achievement of a mature sovereign self (Elshtain, 2008: p. 227-30).

Finally, Elshtain was thorough in her following of an Intellectual Deviation story which begins with Ockham and ends in the 'pro-choice' movement. The protagonist of the story is the human sovereign who seeks godlike powers. It is essential to indicate that one can legitimately use the Intellectual Deviation genealogical trend to unmask the

intellectual background of the current phenomenon. It perhaps is difficult to argue against it. Nevertheless, it should be added that this does not imply that the 'pro-choice' movement (or Nazi eugenics) are the *only* results of the new order of concepts and doctrines. As Taylor showed, the new order can be understood by a master narrative which explains how *all* of the options (either religious or not) have been affected and re-ordered. So, this genealogy cannot simply be used to provide an analytic tool of condemnation of one option. It was almost behind all other options as well. Viewed in that light, a narrative which unmask the remote origins of modern thought also requires seeing how all the rest of the existing options have been affected by that origin. Otherwise, the narrative might turn into a strategic tool for condemnation of the others. As illustrated above, according to Sloterdijk, turning an 'unmasking project' into 'a strategic tool of condemnation' was indeed the original mistake of the enlighteners.

4.2. Löwith and Gregory's histories of failure

The classic version of the second theme can be found in Karl Löwith's narrative (1949) and the most recent version in Brad Gregory's (2012). Löwith was a member of a generation of thinkers who have experienced the destructions of both world wars. So it was natural for him and his colleagues to be suspicious of human nature, human historical achievements and all political ideologies. One intellectual reaction, as Wolin recognised, was not to interpret Nazism only as a German phenomenon but to connect it with the wider context. The context could be Western modernity in general. For instance, Nazism for Hannah

Arendt was somehow related to Stalinism, because both share some modern conceptions of humanity and both as 'totalizing ideologies' and are putting forward an idea of 'mass practice' (Wolin, 2015: pp. 59-61). The other context could be the tradition. Arendt, yet again, searched for the roots of the modern form of barbarity in tradition. For example in her essay *Tradition and the Modern Age* (1961), she wrote:

The end of a tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that this power of well-worn notions and categories becomes more tyrannical as the tradition loses its living force and as the memory of its beginning recedes; it may even reveal its full coercive force only after its end has come and men no longer even rebel against it. (Arendt, 1961: p. 26)

Wolin prefers a biographical interpretation of Arendt's intellectual tendency toward a contextualization of the disasters of the past century. He believes that Arendt managed to avoid implicating her country of origin. "Perhaps it would have been psychologically difficult for Arendt to admit that Auschwitz was in fact a German invention" (Wolin, 2015: p. 61). We should also recall that most of these figures were living in exile which was another source of trauma for them. As Adorno famously wrote: "To those who no longer have a homeland, writing becomes home" and he concluded that "In the end, authors are not even allowed to be [at] home in their writing". (Adorno, 2015: p. 51)

The biographical and psychological interpretation of the post-war German thinkers (e.g. Arendt, Voegelin, Löwith, Adorno, Horkheimer, etc) would undoubtedly be intellectually gainful. On the whole, it was true that they were, each in his or her own unique way, sorrowfully searching for some sort of broader explanations for the manmade horrors of modern Europe of the time.

For the same reason, one could effortlessly find a spirit of disappointment and frustration in their theories. This was also the dominant theme of Löwith's works. He formulated the answer as follows: "we have learned to wait without hope, for hope would be hope for the wrong thing" (Löwith, 1949: p. 3). Thus in his genealogical study of the theological origins of the modern ideological Messianisms, he suggested that the modern historian cannot have any sort of overarching and comprehensive understanding of man's history. The historian, therefore, should focus on producing some random thoughts about the events as some sort of informed hypotheses which will never result in a wide-ranging theory of history (Löwith, 1949: chapter 1; Wolin, 2015: pp. 70-100).

Gregory's erudite book on the Reformation falls into the same category of disappointment about the future of modernity, if nonetheless for different reasons (Gregory, 2012). So if Milbank emphasised the process of Christian *over-piety* as one of the contexts of modernity, and Taylor's keyword was *hyper-reform*, Gregory is more concerned about the Reformation's *hyper-pluralism*. His genealogy is thoroughly a *history of failures*. That is the history of constant failures of respectively, Middle

Age Christianity, the Reformation, and modernity. However, he begins his genealogy with Scotist theological revolution, and here he put the emphasis on the unintended consequences of the Reformation-- as it is clear in the title of his book. Accordingly, for him, the Reformation is important not only because of the Protestantism's novel conception of the relationship between God and creation; but because:

[T]he intractable doctrinal disagreements among Protestants and especially between Catholics and Protestants [...] had the unintended effect of sidelining explicitly Christian claims about God in relationship to the natural world. This left only empirical observation and philosophical speculation as supra- confessional means of investigating and theorizing that relationship. (Gregory, 2012: p. 40)

Hence the dissent among the Christians of the late Middle Ages, and epitomized by the Thirty Years' War, caused the emergence of the secular as the neutral which was, on the cognitive level, represented by the scientific (thus neutral) 'facts'. Yet its political manifestation was the separation of the state from the Church.

Gregory maintains that there are a series of Life Questions, such as: "What should I live for, and why?" "What should I believe, and why should I believe it?" "What is morality, and where does it come from?" "What kind of person should I be?" These are "serious questions *about* life, with important implications *for* life" (Gregory, 2012: p. 74). Although

people usually do not answer these questions explicitly (except probably academics in philosophy departments), all of the ordinary people have some implicit answers to these questions. Gregory believes that the crisis begun by the failure of the Christians of Middle Ages to practice according to the teachings of the church. After a series of events in the Middle Ages, the hierarchical society became naturalised and eventually “*caritas* was indiscernible in the exercise of power” (Gregory, 2012: p. 367). So when Christianity turned into the mere ideological validation of the socioeconomic hierarchy, the voice of the Church insider critics became louder. The problem with the Protestant critics, Gregory argued, was that they thought that the corruption is the result of the ‘doctrinal errors’ and the Christian teachings (not some sort of, say, institutional and social problems). So, their recommended method was a return to the original biblical messages. When they challenged the Church’s authority in its interpretation of the Scriptures, they unintentionally paved the way for questions about the nature of knowledge which ended up in “radical doctrinal scepticism and relativism already in 1520s” (Gregory, 2012: p. 369). Gregory believes that the ‘open-ended range of rival truth claims about answers to the Life Questions’ is “the most important distant historical source for contemporary Western hyperpluralism” (Gregory, 2012: p. 369). So the Reformation figures also failed because of the unintended consequences of their doctrinal reform.

Finally, according to Gregory, mid-seventieth century modernity was ‘forged’ and ‘fabricated’ in the context of these failures. Still, he believes that the Enlightenment’s faith in ‘reason alone’ was a misstep.

So while modern philosophy failed to provide a 'rational substitute' for religious answers to Life Questions, empirical science also proved not to be the discipline able to do so (Gregory, 2012: pp. 373-383). He concluded the book with these lines:

I wish this book could have had a happier ending. But that would have happened only if the world in which we are living today were different. And our present world would be different only if the past had not been what it was, because the past made the present what it is. At the outset of the twentieth century Lenin asked, "What is to be done?" His answers turned out to be disastrous. I am not among those who believe in comprehensive blueprints for human social engineering backed by political power. That has tended not to go so well, especially in the past century. (2012: p. 381)

Following all these failures, specifically those of the past century, Gregory does not seem to be willing to keep hope alive in difficult times.

Both Löwith and Gregory mostly refer to the failures of the past century as the cause of absolute frustration about the future. A significant analytic gap is discernible here. The methodological presumption of both these ideas is that by seeing the past we can predict future. That is to say, the first statement is this: the past has made us. We are the results of the long march in history. So, human beings are social and historical beings which are constantly subject to production and reproduction in society. The second statement, though, is this: we (the historically and

socially constituted creatures) have failed miserably in the past (specifically the twentieth century). The conclusion from those two statements would be: *Therefore*, we will fail in the future or the chances of failure are so high. This is a quite different statement that needs more evidence which we cannot find in either of the books. Ironically, the rejection of this argument is one of the themes of Löwith's *Meaning in History* (1949). Polybius believed, as Löwith showed, that it is easy to foretell the future by 'inference from the past'. But the contribution of the Abrahamic religions was to reject that idea. According to these religions, that is to say, specifically Christianity and Islam, man cannot foretell the future unless God reveals it to him through revelation (Löwith, 1949: p. 9). This conception of the future is also embedded in modern times, seeing as it does, the future as a dynamic horizon, not merely the natural consequence of the past.

Yet in returning to Gregory's conclusion, one cannot find such an argument for the unavoidability of disappointment about the future, however he might disagree, but the disappointment and the lack of willing to even hope is the result of his presupposed assumption about a missed and disappeared Golden Age. So, the implicit presupposition is that there was a Golden age of harmony between the teachings of the Church and the practices of the believers. There is an implication that answering Life Questions was only possible in the bygone harmony. Now, we cannot return to harmony because the promised balance cannot reproduce itself as a result of a disruption in the normal current of history. This could be an unintended consequence of the Reformation which derailed and

diverted history from its intended course. Whether we believe in such a diversion or not, this presumption needs some evidences and arguments - well beyond plain reference to the bitter experiences of the past century.

4.3. Unger's Experimentalism

My final claim about the Intellectual Deviation story, represented in the rest of the chapter, highlights the way in which it can help us to remain hopeful for the future through engaging in co-practice. Accordingly, my second pragmatist standpoint is about defending the idea of experimentalism. I want to argue that the Intellectual Deviation story prepares us with a crucial distinction between two sides of Prometheanism (rebellion versus self-creation) which is helpful to engage in co-existence and co-practice in a Taylorian age of plurality of options.

So where does pragmatism and the Intellectual Deviation story overlap? Roberto Unger's take on pragmatism is relevant to this discussion (Unger, 2007). However, he traced his pragmatism back to Nicholas of Cusa (Unger, 2007: p. 28); I will argue it is more understandable and defensible in the Scotist nominalist frame.

Let us begin with the discussion presented in the former section. Unger believes that the miserable heritage of the past century and its ideologies affected the Western mind-set. So, he writes:

After the calamitous adventures and conflicts of the twentieth century and the downfall of many of its utopian hopes, humanity finds itself tied to a very restricted repertory of institutional options for organizing each part of

social life. These options are the fate of contemporary societies. We can escape that fate only by renovating and enlarging this repertory. (Unger, 2007: p. 185)

The theme of emancipation from the 'unhappy', restricted and fate-centred mind-set is one of the main themes of Unger's works (Unger, 1998 and 2007). His answer is summarised in this motto: 'recapture the imagination of alternatives' (Unger, 2007: p. 185). That is to say, we need to get over, Unger suggests, the horrors of the past experiences not by restricting our options to the least utopian (thus less dangerous) ones but, conversely, through imagining radically different alternative futures.

The underlying idea of his argument is that human beings are more godlike when they are not confined to the present context (Unger, 2007: p. 43). When we do not let the *past* dictate to us the form of the present, we will be more godlike. So, this is the first fundamental similarity between the nominalist voluntarist theological conception of God and Unger's pragmatism. In other words, God cannot be bounded and confined with anything determined beyond His powers; even His own former decisions. Having godlike powers, hence, is to allow the minimum of determination from the past decisions/experiences as well as the least effects from the present contexts.

In other words, Unger's invitation is *to let the future (not the past) change and form the present*. So, while for Löwith and Gregory the present is a wretched result of the past bitter experiences, Unger's pragmatist approach urges us to seek a present that is oriented to the

future. That is to say, we can create “a present that provides us with the instruments of its overcoming” (Unger, 2007: p. 28). Thus, we need more alternative options, more imaginary possible futures and thus more systematic usage of imagination, not sticking with already existing and less-risky options. To the extent that we allow the images of the future to change our present condition, we will empower the individual. By empowering the individual, Unger means: raising the individual up to the godlike power and freedom (Unger, 2007: p. 28).

The second area of overlap between Unger’s pragmatism and the nominalist theology is this: both (intentionally or unintendedly) provide human beings with freedom through preparing him with powers of self-creation. When we form and shape the present we form and shape ourselves. Therefore, the human being is the only creature which has the advantage of being able to create and recreate him or herself. One can, for instance, extend this idea in politics. A pragmatist politics, for Unger, is a politics which is not mere “registering of preferences”. It is, instead, “a process of collective learning and self-formation” (Unger, 2007: P. 189). Unger supports a form of political democratic system which encourages citizens to take risk and learn from those experiments. Any risk, though, comes with the possibility of failure. Those failures, should not be considered as being merely disastrous, but educational. They should not also, Unger demands, be destructive for the risk-taker citizen. They should be, alternatively, a source of learning. The fundamental idea is that we cannot learn only through the review and internalisation of the

formerly existed principles²². We, instead, learn from our own acts and experiences. In the same vein, Holbrook and Briggie suggest that “principles should only serve the limited role of starting points for discussion of particular actions” (Holbrook and Briggie, 2014: p. 62). Why is that? Their argument goes like this: “acting requires autonomy”. That is to say, “acting requires that we own our actions” (Holbrook and Briggie, 2014: p. 62). So, if we know in advance, through those principles, what we should do on a certain occasion, we are thus determined by something which precedes our autonomy (Holbrook and Briggie, 2014: p. 62). Therefore, we will not be autonomous which was a prerequisite of an educational action. Their suggestion and final conclusion is that we should treat principles as starting points for discussion and platforms of actions not necessary guides. This, I believe, is the spirit of what Unger called pragmatist *experimentalism*. The elements of this sort of experimentalism (autonomy, primacy of action, godlike power etc.) were firstly explained and highlighted in the fourteenth century nominalist theology.

A political system which is founded on experimentalism not only encourages citizens to take risks but it also prepares and guarantees a form of safety net to protect them from the misfortune and the consequences of risks. Unger tends to call this an anti-fate project (Unger, 2007: p. 191). Thus, the government is able *to undo fate*, so to

²² In this sense, he came closer to John Dewey who defended the idea of democracy as education. Even further, Dewey believed that America is an experiment (Shook, 2014). So in this way, American citizens do not receive education to be democratic afterwards. Democracy is the process of trying several ways and through all the adventures citizens learn something useful.

speak, through guaranteeing and securing a level of support for minimum income, health care and so on. Such a safety net, accordingly, diminishes the role that “social fortune and misfortune have in shaping our life chances” (Unger, 2007: p. 191). It also intrigues and induces a sense of curiosity and search that is needed to imagine the unimaginable and also act accordingly with the minimum possible concern about the unintended consequences. Unger believes such a society will produce more godlike, empowered and free individuals who are able to take risks and learn from their own experiences²³.

5. What is to be done?

The final argument is that the desire of self-formation, self-creation and self-actualisation is the second side of Prometheanism. The first side, which is well-known, is the rebellion against the transcendental and considering the transcendental as the projection of the human mind into the sky. The point is that there can never be an overwhelming consensus about either this Promethean description of the origins of religion or

²³ There is a relevant point of discussion here which is Beck's notion of 'risk society' which is mainly concerned with the idea of 'risk avoiding'. Risk society's central question, for Beck, was how to prevent, minimize or channel the risks which are systematically produced as part of the modernization process (Beck, 1992: p. 19). If the central ideal of the industrial society was *creation* and the fair *distribution* of wealth, the ultimate ideal of the risk society would be *safety* from the hazards caused by modernization (Beck, 1992: pp. 49-50; Beck, 1999: chapter two). It is curious that Beck believed that the counterpart to the knowledge of risk society is reflexive knowledge which investigates the meta-changes in the risk society (Beck, Bonss & Lau, 2003: pp. 5-8). Beck's use of the term reflexivity was different from (but still connected to) the use of the term by Giddens and Lash (Beck, 1999: chapter six). Reflexive modernization for Beck was the process of the emergence of radical modernization. That is to say, modernity demystifies and questions its own structures. "Simple modernization becomes reflexive modernization to the extent that it disenchant and then dissolves its own taken-for-granted premises" (Beck, Bonss & Lau, 2003: p. 3). A disharmony between the conservative ideal of safety and the radical ideal of reflexivity is traceable here. To be radical and reflexive makes some levels of *risk-taking* unavoidable. It thus becomes necessary to revise and radicalise the first Beck of 'risk society' with the help of the second Beck of 'reflexive modernity'.

another description of man being the projection of God on earth. We, nevertheless, are living in a society which contains both of those options and a lot more alternative possibilities in between. So, while we cannot reach an overlapping consensus about the principles, we can pragmatically engage in the process of self-formation through what Sloterdijk called co-practice (Sloterdijk, 2013: 450-452). In this way, we do not need to presuppose that an authentic moment in history should be revived, or need a common knowledge and a series of principles to guide us all the way. We just need to accept the existing order of the society as a start point and also to consider its dynamicity and plasticity. So, as Taylor said, the existing order which gives priority to the [Promethean] individual was avoidable and was not a necessary destiny of history. It, nonetheless, occurred (Taylor, 2007). It still is not the final order and the normal state of being (as subtraction stories would suggest). So it can be and will be changed and transformed. Finally, as it emerged not only and solely through some doctrinal transformations, it cannot only and solely be changed through some intellectual amendments. The transformation, alternatively, will be the result of practice and co-practice. So, we need to realistically recognise that we are living in a secular age. At the same time, though, the realist conception would lead us to be pragmatically engaged in actively transforming ourselves and thus the society around us. Unger's suggestion for this engagement was an experimentalist scheme. I would suggest that to be an experimentalist in a Promethean age, we should be able to recognise the second side of Prometheanism which is self-creation.

We might explain the self-creation side of Prometheanism by connecting the previously discussed Sloterdijk's critique of the Enlightenment 'ideology critique' and his defence of self-forming asceticism. Sloterdijk argues for "an expansion of the practice zone" and writes:

Being human means existing in an operatively curved space in which actions return to affect the actor, works the worker, communication the communicator, thoughts the thinker and feelings the feeler. All these forms of reaction [...] have an ascetic, that is to say a practicing character—although [...] they largely belong to the undeclared and unnoticed asceticisms or the occulted training routines. (Sloterdijk, 2013: p. 110)

Marx, perhaps, was the first and the most significant contributor to the recognition of the 'curved space' in the Promethean context. In his early years, Marx was stunned by Feuerbach's mode of ideology critique and anthropological explanation of religion as a form of alienation. However, he gradually distanced himself from Feuerbach by claiming that none of the Young Hegelians were radical enough and "they were not getting at the 'roots'" (Bernstein, 1972: p. 68). So the key to our discussion is how Marx defined the 'roots'. In a way, he was not totally happy with Feuerbach's critique of religion because it was incomplete. Feuerbach revealed and unmasked the 'essence' of religion but he stops there. In his sixth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx wrote:

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relations. (Marx Qutd. in Bernstein, 1972: p. 66)

From this notion of 'ensemble of social relations', Marx concludes the dynamic potential of praxis to overcome all forms of alienation in history. The true Marxian question was what Lenin asked later on: *what is to be done?* Bernstein showed that getting into the roots, for Marx, was to understand that '[g]enuinely new potentialities arise as a result of human praxis' (Bernstein, 1972: p. 70). It was in his *Manuscripts* that "practice takes on the creative power of the divinity" (Feenberg, 2014: p. 215). Namely, nature was treated as a raw material and subject to human's godlike will, manipulation and transformative decision.

Marx attempted to go beyond the modern unbridgeable gap between 'is' and 'ought' or fact and value through praxis. The attempt was "to break through the barrier of alienated and reified cultural forms to a reflexive concept of transforming practice" (Feenberg, 2014: p. 215). This issue can be addressed by rejection of a common misconception of Marx's role as a moralist. Marx famously invited a revolution in the role of the philosopher thus he asked them to change the world not to merely interpret it. He was also the writer of the most heated passages against capitalism and for the sake of proletariat revolutionary action. However, Bernstein, echoing Lobkowitz, convincingly showed that Marx did not believe that one can measure the alienated state of human being against some image of 'transcendental human nature', 'logically predetermined

future' or a definite self-actualised human (Bernstein, 1972: pp. 69-70). So Marx had not begun with such an 'ought' as a moral basis of the rejection of the existing capitalism. It is crucial to note Marx's Hegelian context. Both Marx and Engels considered the Hegelian tradition as being 'essentially completed' (Feenberg, 2014: p. 16) and it was time to study it from 'outside'. So while for Hegel the resolution of antinomies was a merely speculative and theoretical task, for Marx even the philosophical categories were the "sublimated versions of concrete social relations" (Feenberg, 2014: p. 204). If so, philosophical dichotomies can only be transcended through social practice.

The result of practice is, Marx argued, the possibility of envisaging new and previously unknown possibilities of "ultimate human self-actualisation" (Bernstein, 1972: p. 70). So in this sense, the results are 'genuinely new potentialities' because they cannot be foreseen before action. Thus, Marx was not suggesting that man should overthrow the existing conditions of production. His whole point was that "the 'material practice' necessarily does overthrow them" (Lobkowitz, 1967: p. 418). The point that Bernstein and Lobkowitz were trying to make was that Marx was not a mere moralist and prophet who imagined a revolution and the results of his imaginative future were the *Manifesto* (on the united revolutionary action of the workers of the world) or his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach (on the necessity of changing the world by philosophers). Marx's answer to Lenin's question (i.e. what is to be done) was to transcend the philosophical dichotomies by practice which will lead to new potentialities of self-actualisation. So Marx's main point is:

... human practice is revolutionary by its very nature. It is what men do that is decisive in history, not what they do by wilfully engaging in social struggles aimed at destroying the existing order, but rather what they constantly and inevitably do as determined by what past generations have done. (Lobkowitz, 1967: p. 418)

All in all, for Marx, practice is not something that we should do in the future to change the existing conditions. It is rather what we do as human beings. The new potentialities will emerge out of those practices. In this sense, Marx radicalised Feuerbach by seeing not only religion as a manmade product, but man himself as a result of the ensemble of social relations, social class and labor. He wrote:

[F]or socialist man, however, the entire *so-called world history* is only the creation of man through human labor and the development of nature for man, he has evident and incontrovertible proof of his *self-creation*, his own *formation process*. (Marx Qutd. in Bernstein, 1972: p. 67. Ital. Original)

Let us say it in this way, from Sloterdijk's point of view; Feuerbach could represent the Enlightenment man of 'ideology critique'. Feuerbach formulated the rebellion side of the Prometheanism by revealing how religion is fabricated. In other words, he showed that religion is not what religious people assume. Marx, nevertheless, fully represents the modern discoverer of the 'curved space' and the second aspect of Prometheanism i.e. self-creation. Answering the question of 'what is to be

done' after the Enlightenment is to answer the question of how to go beyond ideology critique and unmasking; How to co-practice and to co-create new possibilities and open new horizons.

Löwith, Elshtain and Gregory would argue that the bitter experiences of communism and Nazi eugenic projects were some of those 'new possibilities'. There were, arguably, the radical interpretations of self-formation and perfection seeking. Nevertheless, the outcome was not as plausible as Marx foresaw. So, finally, according to Marx, there is not any human essence or transcendental human nature that can work as a criterion of making progress. If the past experiences were also miserable failures, what will remain to be considered as a criterion of progress? What is the current motivation behind the idea of progress? Neither is there a transcendental goal in the future that human beings can reach and celebrate its attainment, nor an inside nature according to which we act and consequently enjoy the achieved harmony. So, what is there that lets us hope for the future? Why do we still 'irrationally' believe in the new (and also positive) potentialities that will appear following practice? How is it possible for us to keep hoping in the modern age? Comparative studies with other periods of human history show that the belief in science or a better future after a political revolution, are not rational and self-evident hopes. In many periods of human history people were expecting a coming apocalypse and thus total annihilation. Nonetheless, they have never experienced anything close to the horrible experiences of the past century. So, why are we still able to hope?

Again, at this juncture, the Intellectual Deviation story gives us the most satisfactory answer. It puts emphasis on a journey which began in the fourteenth century and ended up in the emergence of 'exclusive humanism' and new conceptions of human flourishing detached from the transcendental. It gives us a reasonable starting point to tell a long story of the attribution of God's powers and creativity to human beings and to seeing the future as a dynamic horizon potentially still on our side.

Hopefulness is a common theme of Unger's experimentalism and of Sloterdijk's invitation to co-practice. In a way, both these pragmatic projects are today's radicalisations of the basic doctrines that firstly appeared in the nominalist theology. That is to say, we can and should remain hopeful and keep dreaming for a more plausible future because the future is different from the past. Thus, one cannot learn and foresee the future by looking at the past. Also the future is not predetermined by a transcendental being; rather, it is continually created by human praxis.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Taylor's Reform Master Narrative, which is a genealogical study of the process of the emergence of the modern secular age, is similar to the Intellectual Deviation story, which follows the same goal but from a different perspective. The latter is more elitist and narrates the story of the emergence of a revolutionary theology among the scholastic nominalists of the fourteenth century. I have argued that both narratives are sharing a more or less similar description of the nominalist theological upheaval and both consider it not to be the most important 'reason' behind modern secularity but a

relatively significant historical factor. I also argued that the Intellectual Deviation story is still relevant and important. In brief: First of all, it makes a reasonable starting point for a long narrative of the emergence of the modern secularity. Secondly, it helps us to give a positive explanation for the theoretical invention of the secular which has been ignored by the subtraction stories. Thirdly, the Intellectual Deviation story remains relevant and important today. It still prepares us with the most convincing answer for the question of modern hope: why do we still hope for a happier future? The Intellectual Deviation story would answer the question by referring to the theological unconscious of the positive view to the future. Finally, I have argued that the Intellectual Deviation story also can prepare us with a normative judgement. That is to say, it certainly contributed in seeing the world as a curved space in which work shapes the worker and thought the thinker etc. So, not only descriptively was it the unconscious background of the emergence of the modern Prometheanism but it can also show us the second more hidden aspect of Prometheanism which is the idea of self-formation, self-creation and self-actualisation by mimicking the transcendental, that is by attaining godlike powers. However, we might not be totally agreed on the rejection of the transcendental, we can, nonetheless, agree on co-practice to form ourselves. In the next chapters, I will show that tourist atheism is a promising starting point for noticing the recent aspect of Prometheanism.

Part Two

Pilgrim and Tourist Atheisms

Pilgrimage, on the one hand, is the experience of travelling between the clear borders; between light and dark or true and false. I have used this metaphor for those atheists that deeply believe in the reason versus faith dichotomy. Today representatives of pilgrim atheism are the New Atheists who mostly rely on Darwinism in their rejection of religions. So, the scientific reason which is not 'contaminated' with faith, for them, is the border which divides true from false. Tourism as a category, on the other hand, is not compatible with the idea of sanctity because sanctity is interwoven with the idea of unity. But tourism is the experience of a plurality of goals. Thus, tourists unlike pilgrims do not see the world as being clearly divided between true and false. Tourism is the metaphor that I employ to describe an emerging type of atheism. Tourist atheists are players who do not restrict themselves to one criterion such as reason. They instead try to see religions as buffets offering useful items for an atheistic life.

In chapter four, I will show how the myth of warfare between religion and science, as the foundational myth for New Atheism, has been constructed. In chapter five, I will describe the touristic logic of the central figure of today's tourist atheism: Alain de Botton. I will argue that tourism

is the logic behind all of his works, not only those about religion but also those on philosophy and art. In chapter six, I will go through the details about the theological roots of the tourist atheist conception of the individual. The argument of that chapter is that the 'individual-sovereign' is one part of the Franciscan trinity of God, State and individual sovereigns, expanded to the modern age. I will also show the centrality of such a theological conception of the individual in the works of atheist philosophers such as Peter Sloterdijk. Finally, in chapter seven of the thesis, this question will be addressed: is Auguste Comte the forerunner of tourist atheism? It is a crucial question because of Comte's understanding of the modern spiritual crisis.

Chapter Four

Pilgrim Atheists and the Myth of Warfare

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will write about the theological foundations of the scientific approach of those contemporary pilgrim atheists that call themselves *New Atheists*. I will argue that although Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, among others, do not like to be called 'reductionist' because of its semantic implication (i.e. being simplistic), they are nonetheless tempted to choose simple, coherent, straightforward and easy-going theories. I intend to search for the cause of this temptation in the theological ideals of modern science, the most important of which is what Amos Funkenstein called the ideal of *economy and coherence*. That ideal was based on seeking a univocal and representational language, on the one hand, and presupposing a homogenous nature on the other hand. So a scientist of the dawn of the modern age could discover the natural laws, which are represented in epistemologically simple but ontologically pervasive formulas, and in this way he (in this case dominantly male) could gain god-like powers. The main insight of this chapter is that we can find the radicalised and ideologised version of the ideal of 'economy and coherence' in the New Atheists' naturalistic arguments against the existence of God.

2. The God that the New Atheists reject

Dawkins' arguments against the existence of God are the most explicit amongst the arguments of the New Atheists because he writes extensively, not only on the scientific issues but also on the rejection of religious beliefs – for example, *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986) and *The God Delusion* (2006). Nevertheless, explicit does not mean philosophically valid. Many philosophers have written about the failures of his arguments against God (see: Plantinga, 2011; Taylor, 2013).

One can find two forms of arguments against God in works by Dawkins. Firstly, Dawkins tried to explain the existence of the belief in a higher being called God in agreement with his biological point of view. So, he coined the term cultural *meme* which rhymes with biological gene. 'Meme' for him was a unite of transmission and replication within a culture (Dawkins, 2006b: p. 192). In this way, he makes a parallel between cultural transmission and genetic transmission and this assumes an evolutionary process for cultural phenomena. So memes, more or less, like genes propagate themselves through leaping from brain to brain and particularly by imitation. Dawkins also emphasises that like genes, memes are subject to variation. So a meme might be popular in certain culture but not because of its ability to improve and increase our chances of survival but because of its "psychological appeal" (Dawkins, 2006b: pp. 191-4). A major difference between gene and meme, nevertheless, is that the genetic mutation is blind and cannot be influenced by the organism. However, cultural selection, in principal at least, can be manipulated, controlled and guided.

Dawkins believes that “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches” are good examples of those memes (Dawkins, 2006b: p. 192). Dennett, for his part, believes that memes are ‘distinct memorable units’ such as parts of Homer’s *Odyssey* (Dennett, 1995: p. 344). But yet both Dawkins and Dennett argue that the most successful meme is the idea of God. It has survived for thousands of years and has been popular among countless generations and cultures. Dawkins’s intriguing question is this: “What is it about the idea of God that gives it its stability and penetrance in the cultural environment?” (Dawkins, 2006b: p. 193). Accordingly his answer is:

The survival value of the god meme in the meme pool results from its great psychological appeal. It provides a superficially plausible answer to deep and troubling questions about existence. It suggests that injustices in this world may be rectified in the next. (Dawkins, 2006b: p. 193)

In other words, God comes about as the reconciling of existential questions. The religious idea of God, as an omnipotent but yet invisible creator of everything, is a simple, understandable and appealing answer. Thus, this turned into a historically successful meme in several human civilisations. Memes serve as an answer not only to the question of belief in God but also as an attractive response to a deeper and more challenging question: can we draw any parallel between the natural and cultural spheres? Does culture work according to its specific and

independent dynamics? Dawkins's answer in his *The Selfish Gene* was negative.

From a sociological point of view, the meme theory is 'reductionist and blind to the roles of agents' in promoting specific cultural resources (Lowe, 2010: p. 296). For instance, Lowe argues that Dawkins's memetic approach rules out and underestimates the role of strategies that the agents adopt to disseminate particular idea into a society. Moreover, it never addresses this question: why some memes are central in a given society while others are marginal? (Lowe, 2010: p. 296). For example, why is the idea of God is so central to many traditional cultures while the idea of natural laws through which God will control the world is not that widespread? The idea of natural laws among the Abrahamic religions gave a specifically satisfactory explanation of human existence and the mechanisms of the world. Yet, in this form it never existed in, say, the Far East. All in all, the point is that by this theory Dawkins gives a simple and somehow deterministic argument for a popular belief in God. It is deterministic because in a classic way it defines a biological infrastructure and a cultural superstructure. Thus, evolution is considered to be a common and hidden logic of being. The same laws, also, applied in both areas of culture and non-culture. From a sociological point of view, this type of metaphorical and analogical explanation is hardly considered to be enough. But the point still, is that Dawkins arguments tend toward those simple and unifying explanations which explain everything. This is, perhaps, a version of the scientific ideal of a theory of everything about which I will write below.

The second argument is known as ‘the Ultimate Boeing 747’ in which Dawkins tried to say that the existence of God is as improbable as “the chance that a hurricane, sweeping through a scrapyard, would have the luck to assemble a Boeing 747” (2006: pp. 137-8). We might wonder why he used such an odd example for the rejection of God. Dawkins explained his intention in this way: “a God who is capable of sending intelligible signals to millions of people simultaneously, and of receiving messages from all of them simultaneously, cannot be, whatever else he might be, simple” (2006: p. 184). So, God (or God’s mind) needs to be extremely complex, but where does this ultimate complex being come from? Dawkins says that there is no chance that God can come into existence without another complex designer – just like a highly complex machine such as a Boeing 747. Consequently, this discussion will end up in a vicious regress which is not logically plausible. Therefore, the conclusion is that such a being does not exist.

James Taylor criticised Dawkins by arguing that the ‘complexity’ that Dawkins attributed to the Boeing 747 needs to be different from the ‘complexity’ that he attributes to God because the first one is a physical being while the second one is a supernatural one; he also argued that that such a complex being as God does not necessarily need an external designer. That is to say, one can attribute such complexity to ‘something in God’s nature’ (Taylor, 2013: pp. 739-741). For instance, the God of Abrahamic religions has always been considered ‘perfect’. Therefore “God does not depend for God’s existence on anything other than God” (Taylor, 2013: p. 740). But Dawkins has never clarified his own

conception of God, His alleged complexity or the dissimilarities between his God and the God of the believers.

Additionally, most of these criticisms of Dawkins' conception of God share one point that I tend to call the atheistic *add-on* to the theory of evolution. This add-on is a thesis that Plantinga called '*the naturalistic origin thesis*' and is different from the theory of evolution and Darwinism. The '*naturalistic origin thesis*' states that "life itself developed from non-living matter" and that this is a process which does not need the creative activity of a designer (Plantinga: 2011, p. 9). The point is that this belief is neither the logical consequence of the evolutionary theory nor that of the idea of natural selection. Rather, it is an independent argument, the validity of which remains unexamined. For Plantinga, the theory of evolution and the idea of natural selection would at best demonstrate that:

[1] It is not astronomically improbable that the living world was produced by unguided evolution and hence without design.

But the argument from

[1] P is not astronomically improbable

[2] therefore P,

is a bit unprepossessing. (Plantinga, 2011: pp. 24-5)

Thus, there is an inconsistency in Dawkins' argument against God. In other words, he leaps from a scientific, informed guess to an absolutely true worldview which shows the absurdity of the idea of God. Alister McGrath also has seen such a problematic transition from Darwinism

considered as a provisional scientific theory, to Darwinism considered as a universal worldview (McGrath, 2010: p. 336).

Those who criticise Dawkins typically stop here. That is to say, they show his inconsistency but they do not go further to ask about the underlying reason. But, I tend to assume that there is a significant implication behind it. Why do the New Atheists not see this apparent inconsistency? Why do they not argue in support of their naturalistic add-on to the evolutionary theory? McGrath points out a simple but serious issue in this vein. He says that New Atheists “tend to assume that this is self-evident” (McGrath, 2010: p. 337). To put it another way, the New Atheists do not see this *add-on* as an add-on; rather, they think that this is a logical consequence of the evolutionary theory which forced Darwin himself to give up his God.²⁴ Thus for New Atheists, relinquishing the idea of a God is the ‘self-evident’ consequence of those scientific ‘facts’. But why do they believe in such a thing? I want to suggest that we need to search for the answer not in a God that the New Atheists reject but in a God that they reproduce.

3. The God that the New Atheists reproduce

The God that the New Atheists reproduce, I suggest, is the God who became the role model of early modern scientists – a God who possessed ‘objective’ knowledge. Jesus, according to the Christian narratives, also ‘became God’ when he gained that knowledge through his journey along the continuum of being from man’s pole to God’s (see

²⁴ However, Darwin did not become an atheist – he finally called himself *agnostic*. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), known as ‘Darwin’s Bulldog’, coined the term in 1869.

chapter two). How did this theological approach to God, Jesus and (later on) scientists appear? Following the main thesis of this study that was elaborated on in previous chapters, I will argue that this approach goes back to the Scotist revolution in scholasticism.

For Aquinas and *via antiqua*, language was full of analogies and symbols. But for Scotus, the natural objects were no longer the symbols of something beyond themselves (Funkenstein, 1986: pp. 28-9). The Scotist univocal conception of language (i.e. the concepts mean the same thing when they refer either to man or God) became the basis of the modern scientific discourse. Funkenstein called this *the drive for unequivocation*, which means that “the ultimate prospect of science was a *mathesis universalis* – an unequivocal, universal, coherent, yet artificial language to capture our ‘clear and distinct’ ideas and their unique combinations” (Funkenstein, 1986: pp. 28-9). Nonetheless, the Scotist revolution did not remain limited to the language. It also challenged the old ontology by presuming a homogeneous, uniform and symmetrical nature. That nature was not governed by a body of patchwork laws; rather, there are natural laws which apply both to heaven and earth. Funkenstein called this *the drive for homogeneity* (Funkenstein, 1986: p. 28). The drives for homogeneous nature and univocal language were in fact the consequences of the new Scotist conception of the relationship between man and God: the omnipresent God who exists in things, and the man who has been created in the image of God so can therefore become God. Needless to say, Newton’s ideal of *mathematisation* or “the demand to see nature as ‘written in mathematical letters’” was the result

of this type of attitude toward nature (Funkenstein, 1986: p. 29). The crucial point that Funkenstein makes is that both of these drives (the drive for univocation and the drive for homogeneity) are two parts of one ideal for the modern scientific pilgrimage: the ideal of '*economy and coherence*' (1986: p. 30).

This ideal of "the economy of language and the structure of things" (Funkenstein, 1986: p. 30) was the underlying motivation behind the concentration of the attempts of seventeenth-century scientists to find the mathematical language of nature (e.g. Newton). By the second half of the nineteenth century this ideal had shifted from physics and astronomy to biology. That was when Charles Darwin (1809-1882) coined the term 'the tree of life'. Dennett reformulated Darwin's main thesis in this way: "Life on Earth has been generated over billions of years in a single branching tree — the tree of life — by one *algorithmic* process or another" (Dennett, 1995: p. 51—*ital.* mine). The keyword here is the 'algorithm' as the embodiment of the inner mathematical harmony of nature. Dennet believes it is this algorithm which is behind all the diversity of species and "all the other occasions for wonder in the world of nature" (1995: p. 59). This is also the core, irrefutable and universal argument of Darwinism according to Dawkins (Dawkins, 2003: pp. 80-90).

Therefore, we can claim that the tree of life is a notion premised on the scientific ideal of '*economy and coherence*'. For Darwinists such as Dawkins and Dennett, it is a "graph that plots the time-line trajectories of all the things that have ever lived on this planet" (Dennett, 1995: p. 85). The main point about Darwin's idea of natural selection is the type of

‘unity’ that it presupposes for nature (i.e. the idea of the tree of life) and also the ‘coherence’ of the theoretical representation of everything (i.e. the algorithmic representation of the tree of life). That is to say, by two sides of this ideal, Darwin could explain the creation of human beings, animals and plants in a very simple, coherent and univocal manner. This ontological unity and epistemological coherence are the issues at stake here.

One who lives in contemporary society might think that this kind of unity is the prerequisite of *any* type of science. Thus, if science is about the discovery of nature it should give such unity to nature, one way or another. The historical facts do not confirm this kind of conception of the ‘essence’ of the scientific efforts. The point is that not only we can imagine a sort of science which does not contain the ideal of ‘economy and coherence’ but also such a science did exist in other times and other civilisations. For example, for Aristotle, each type of thing in the world demands its own version of knowledge. There is no unifying form of knowledge that applies to everything in the world (Fuller, 2007: p. 16). The ancient Chinese also did not believe in an unmoved mover or God in whose image men are created and who controls the world through natural laws. Contrarily, they believed that the heaven behaves in reaction to the acts of men in society. That is, if the emperor performs badly, floods, earthquakes, famines and other natural disasters will follow, but if the emperor’s behaviour is good to people the world’s organic order will remain in harmony (Fara, 2009: p. 51). This type of modern conception of

science through conceivable natural laws could solely be found in civilisations with Abrahamic religions.

The concluding points can be expressed as follows. The New Atheists are interested in Darwin's theory of evolution because it is 'simple', 'universal' and 'coherent' which is known as the *theory of everything*. Finding this simplicity and coherence as the attractive goals of science itself is the product of the Scotist breakthrough in the Christian context of Europe. Following this Scotist line of thought, modern scientists came to the idea that man could see nature from God's point of view by discovering those distinct and clear natural laws.

4. New Atheists radicalised the ideal of 'economy and coherence'

The New Atheists often defended this type of economy and coherence. However, what I call the radicalisation of this ideal faced them with another accusation – being *reductionist*. In response, they tried to show that being 'reductionist' was not a flaw (Dawkins, 1982: p. 113; Dennett, 1995: pp. 80-4). This has been discussed mainly by the 'radical scientists' during the 1990s. For example, Rose *et al.* accused Dawkins of being reductionist and defined the term in this way:

[Reductionists] try to explain the properties of complex wholes – molecules, say, or societies – in terms of the units of which those molecules and societies are composed. They would argue, for example, that the properties of a protein molecule could be uniquely determined and predicated in

terms of the properties of the electrons, protons, etc., of which its atoms are composed. (qtd. in Dawkins, 1986: p. 72)

Dawkins did not defend himself against this accusation, saying that if this is reductionism, “I am a reductionist and proud of it” (Dawkins, 1986: p. 72). Then he separated it into two types: ‘step-by-step reductionism’ and ‘precipice reductionism’. Dawkins says that all successful scientists are members of the first category. That is, they take a policy of gradual movement from the higher levels of complexity to the lower levels to understand what is happening in nature. The precipice reductionist on the other hand would try to go all the way in one step and choose one element as the cause. Dawkins believes that the category of precipice reductionism does not include any member of the real world of science (Dawkins, 1986: pp. 72-76). Dawkins concludes that the reductionism tag is a ‘dirty word’ that opponents attribute to Darwinists, while in fact it is how science works (Dawkins, 1986: p. 75). Dennett also believes that reductionism is a ‘term of abuse’ while Darwinism is ‘reductionism incarnate’, and that this is not a bad thing:

In itself, the desire to reduce, to unite, to explain it all in one big overarching theory, is [not] to be condemned as immoral [...]. It is not wrong to yearn for simple theories, or to yearn for phenomena that no simple (or complex!) theory could ever explain. [...] Darwin’s dangerous idea is reductionism incarnate, promising to unite and explain just about everything in one magnificent vision. Its being the idea of an

algorithmic process makes it all the more powerful, since the subtract neutrality it thereby possesses permits us to consider its application to just about anything. (Dennett, 1995: p. 82—*ital.* original)

In fact, in this case I am more on the New Atheists' side of the argument. Reductionism is a 'term of abuse' for the real process of making science. The desire for *the theory of everything* – either in biology or physics – is the innate characteristic of modern science which goes back to that constitutive ideal of 'economy and coherence'. The problem with the New Atheists' position is not the ideal in itself but the fact that they radicalised it to pursue a political (in the wide meaning of politics) goal. How did they radicalise this ideal? They have treated that scientific theory as an ideology or worldview which is absolutely true and because of that it is considered to be not only a theory but a 'universal acid', according to Dennett (1995: chapter 3).

Dennett believes this notion of the algorithmic tree of life is the 'universal acid' that erodes the old-fashioned metaphysical idea of God and any other supernatural being. So the idea of God can be replaced by the scientific idea of an algorithmic tree of life. The power of that *acid* comes from its simple and coherent justification of the origin of life. Dawkins, for his part, believes that this is because the idea of natural selection solves the *problem of improbability*: some natural phenomena are 'too statistically improbable' which means they are too beautiful or too complex to have come into existence by chance. So the Creationists come to the conclusion that there is a designer (Dawkins, 2007: p. 146).

Rejecting the idea of a design, Dawkins believes that the algorithmic tree of life solves the *problem of improbability* because it is a 'cumulative process':

which breaks the problem of improbability up into small pieces. Each of the small pieces is slightly improbable, but not prohibitively so. When large numbers of these slightly improbable events are stacked up in series, the end product of the accumulation is very very improbable indeed, improbable enough to be far beyond the reach of chance.

(Dawkins, 2007: p. 147)

Thus, neither *chance* nor a *designer* is the solution but *automatic algorithms* which break up the chain into small components. So, if you believe in such a process you *cannot* believe in the design. Plantinga hesitates about this absolute conclusion that one cannot believe in both a design and the algorithmic process of creation. That is to say, this idea of an algorithm as such never says that it is a guided or unguided process. The former is about '*who creates it*' while the latter answers another question: '*how it has been created?*' (Plantinga, 2011: pp. 11-12).

Briefly, we can understand the New Atheists' insistence on the idea of the 'universal acid' as a 'logical' outcome of Darwinism, when we look at 'the economy and coherence' as the ideal of science on the one hand and the historical context of its radicalisation on the other hand. First of all, that ideal of science was based on the conception of gaining the god-like objective knowledge of the universe. So the fundamental

goal of science was a simple, beautiful and univocal theory of the law of nature. The mission was then accomplished and man became God (Prometheanism as I called it) when that simple theory was discovered by Darwin. This atheistic reading of Darwin's theory is nothing but the radicalised version of that ideal of 'economy and coherence'.

5. The myth of warfare between science and religion

Nevertheless, we need to ask why this process, which originated from theology, ended up in utter antagonism with religion. The answer is detectible in the historical situation of the emergence of Darwinism. The story of the 'essential' conflict between science and religion is a total fabrication of the nineteenth century after the publication of John William Drapper's (1811-1882) *The History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874). This book, which went through fifty reprints and was translated into ten languages (Armstrong, 2009: p. 252), was followed by another book called *A History of the Warfare of Science and Theology in Christendom* (1896) by Andrew Dixon White (1832-1918). Both of these writers tried to attribute the conflict between some scientific discoveries and the literal interpretation of the Bible (specifically about the age of the earth) to an old historical conflict between science and religion. The result of this attribution was the 'myth of warfare', as Armstrong calls it – the tale of scientific reason which is imprisoned in the cage of religious superstition during the 'dark ages'. According to the tale, reason eventually released itself in modern times.

In point of fact, the myth of warfare has its own roots in the real conflict of two social agendas in Western Europe – state versus church. It has been mentioned that modern science has been founded on the Scotist interpretation of the *imago dei* doctrine. The Protestant reformation significantly mediated the transition of that Scotist mentality to the modern age. During this process, scientific discussions have been used by Protestants as a political tool against the establishment of the Church and the monopoly of power. Their argument was that while God does not have monopoly over reason, and man has been created in the image and likeness of God, so man also possesses reason just like Him. Thus, man needs nothing more than learning to use his or her own reason through education. Finally, since God does not have that monopoly, it is evident that no human being (or institution such as the Catholic Church) can possess that monopoly either (Fuller, 2007: pp. 20-21). This theoretical/political position against the centralised Church connects Martin Luther (1453-1546) to Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). Martin Luther translated the Bible into the local languages of contemporary Germany. Before that the Bible was in Latin and only the educated priests could read it, and there was a monopoly over the interpretation of the Scripture which was challenged by the emergence of Protestantism. This coincided with the invention of the technology of printing which let the Protestants print the translated Bible for a great number of believers. So, more people could read it and understand it for themselves. The interesting point which shows how nominalism and Protestantism were aligned in that respect is that this movement of the translation of the Bible

started with John Wycliffe (1320-1384), the nominalist thinker before Luther who translated the bible into English for the first time²⁵ (see: MacCulloch, 2010: pp. 564-574). This was a kind of attempt to decentralise the Church from below. Nevertheless, Luther and Wycliffe were not the only persons who challenged the theoretical monopoly of the Church. Galileo did the same thing in his own time; however, he apparently failed. Galileo, in his famous inquisition trial, stated that the language of the Bible was the language of the people of the time or the common sense which describes the appearance of nature. Thus, one cannot use the Biblical language in science. He could easily have concluded from this that the Bible is not scientifically valid, or at least could have suggested the doctrine of the double truth as a diplomatic path in order to rescue himself. As it happens, he did not follow any of those directions. He stuck to a non-conformist position which states that scientific discoveries when established are not only true but are *the truth*. That is, a capable expositor of Scripture would be a scientist such as Galileo himself who has a sound knowledge of natural sciences (Brooke, 1991: p. 78). That is to say, 'reason' for him became the great supporter of the revelation and more than that the most sound bedrock for anyone who wants to interpret the Bible. So Galileo was more in support of a Saint-Scientist, rather than the myth of the warfare between the Athens of reason and the Jerusalem of faith.

The nineteenth-century *myth of warfare* which misread all these historical facts has best been shown in the play *Life of Galileo* (1943) by

²⁵ His translation was officially banned by the English church hierarchy in 1407 and it remained under that sanction until Henry VIII's Reformation in the 1530s.

the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht. There Galileo was shown as a supporter of autonomous reason against dogmatic religious beliefs. For instance, in Scene 3 Galileo turns to Sagredo and says: "I believe in man and that means I believe in reason. Without that belief I would not have the strength to get out of bed in the morning." All in all, this type of misrepresentation of the history of science which takes advantage of the dichotomy of reason/revelation was behind the radicalisation of the ideal of 'economy and coherence' in the works of contemporary atheists. In this way, anything supernatural has been considered not only beyond the scope of scientific formulas but as downright non-existent. Namely, whatever cannot be captured by scientific language turned into the imaginary. So, this history is behind the New Atheists' presumption that the 'naturalistic' rejection of God is not an *add-on* to science but a necessary part of it.

6. Atheism as the background belief of science?

One of the motivations behind the radicalisation of the ideal of 'economy and coherence' in the New Atheist movement was the clarification that many respectable, high-profile scientists are in fact Creationists (Fuller, 2010: p. 89). It was around the 1980s that pilgrim atheism started to adopt an aggressive scientific worldview. The New Atheists who presupposed the myth of warfare between religion and science, thus criticizing the Creationist scientists, concluded that religion should be weakened (if not completely eliminated) for the sake of scientific progress. But are they right in this claim? Would atheism be a proper intellectual background for science? It is very unlikely because,

first of all, history shows that atheists have never made a great contribution to scientific discoveries. Moreover, the very possibility of modern empirical science depended on some epistemological and ontological presumptions that do not exist in any system of thought except the Abrahamic religions. Fuller counts three of the most important of these presumptions:

[The] reality as a whole constitutes (i) a universe (not simply multiple realities) with (ii) ontological depth (not simply the sum of direct experience), all of which is (iii) potentially intelligible to the human mind, by virtue of our (divinely?) privileged place in reality. (Fuller, 2010: p. 111)

The point is that all of these presumptions are necessary for the belief in the existence of natural laws. Those laws also are necessary for the idea of scientific knowledge, since science is nothing but knowing and controlling natural laws. Still, none of these scientifically necessary presumptions is self-evident. For instance, take the last of these presumptions about the cognitively privileged position of human beings. Even the very definition of humanity as an animal with a privileged position which enables him not only to discover but also to control the process of evolution would have been totally different from the mere and pure Darwinian point of view – if such a thing does exist. John Gray in his *Straw Dogs* (2003) mentioned that the idea of the possibility and necessity of men taking charge of their own destinies is a religious belief. Darwin, instead, showed us that we are a kind of animal: “Species are only currents in the drift of genes. The idea that humanity can shape its

future assumes that it is exempt from this truth” (Gray, 2003: p. 6). I want to add that the idea of the cognitively exceptional position of man is definitely related to the religious idea of man who has been created in the image of God. That is, like God we can use our intellect to understand nature. Not only this, but we can also gain god-like powers to control the universe. Considering this god-like image of man, one can understand the history of science as abounding in enormous risks which man does not normally dare to take. Cutting-edge scientists need to presuppose an indefinite capacity for change in the world along with the endless transformational power for human beings to be able to push the boundaries of existing science. The Abrahamic religions prepared us with those presuppositions and opened up the future as a dynamic horizon. Otherwise, the motivation and aspiration behind all these efforts remain ambiguous.

For example, pioneering scientists “act as if no natural obstacle – not even death itself – is too great to be overcome” (Fuller, 2010: p. 102). This ideals of not only controlling the process of evolution but also gaining immortality are the basis of a serious scientific project for Raymond Kurzweil (born 1948) – the American author, inventor, futurist and a director of engineering at Google. Interestingly, when he writes about death, he puts the adjective *natural* within inverted commas. So, the cycle of life which ends in death is ‘natural’ but this does not mean that we need to follow the rules of this cycle. Kurzweil says: “I view disease and death at any age as a calamity, as problems to be overcome” (2008: p. 185). His research project is to reprogramme the software underlying

human biology. That software was originally 'natural' and indispensable for our hunter-gatherer ancestors but it is not necessarily suitable for modern forms of life. We, Kurzweil suggests, should 'turn off' disease and ageing with the help of genetics²⁶ and 'turn on' our "full human potential" (2010: p. 4).

To put it another way, we know that science is based on endless empirical trial and error. The question is, why do we not give up when our experiments so often fail? We might wonder why we are not easily disappointed. Where is the origin of this optimism about the results of scientific studies? The answer is in the theological backdrop of scientific efforts. There we can find full faith in the power of man to know the laws of nature. So, any failure is considered to be related to our methods, not the nature of laws – we never attribute an eternal mysteriousness to the laws of nature.

Additionally, it is helpful to remember that there is a movement among transhumanists to take advantage of that theological backdrop. In a way, we can make a spectrum on the one side of which is the Dawkinsian unintended usage of the *imago dei* doctrine while on the other side is the new transhumanist movement which sees this doctrine behind any scientific inquiry and uses that theological precedence as a

²⁶ Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that this is not a science-fiction tale. This is a highly important scientific project supported by some large companies. Those are companies that never invest in unrealistic projects which do not guarantee their future benefit. The reason that this looks like science-fiction to some people is that it is still hard for us to see the speed of radical scientific-technological changes. Moreover, if this is nothing but science-fiction one needs to remember that science-fiction was the inspiring engine behind scientific discoveries such as the pioneering submarine designer who took the idea from *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870) by Jules Verne (1828-1905).

theoretical background for their projects. If we consider Ray Kurzweil and Max More as the first generation of trans-humanists, it would be legitimate to assert that a theological sensitivity is behind the works of the second generation of trans-humanists who believe that the mere manipulation of human genes and enhancement of human capabilities is not enough for the future of this movement. Trans-humanism, for Fuller and Lipinska (2014) for instance, needs political, legal and economic mechanisms; otherwise it would remain a politically shallow movement (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: p. 6). Interestingly, in their political manifesto for trans-humanism Fuller and Lipinska pursue a detachment from the Darwinistic point of view which they have called 'Darwin pose' because it considers humankind a simple species among many other animals. But for the second generation of trans-humanists we are considered a privileged species that can understand and control the evolutionary process. Namely, we can reprogramme the whole process, so we might be more similar to God on the continuum of being than animals. Here, the theological relevance of their project becomes evident: for them, God is always within human beings and one will be more God-like when he or she achieves the full human potentials. For transhumanists that is more attainable through scientific inquiry rather than through religious services (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: p. 5). Fuller and Lipinska conclude the discussion about the myth of warfare in this way:

If 'evolution' stood simply for an empirically observable process, the ultimate cause of which are subject to legitimate dispute, it is unlikely that the science-religion

controversy would have acquired its global cultural significance. (2014: p. 5)

In other words, without presupposing the aforementioned atheistic add-on as a self-evident outcome of a scientific theory, none of these warfare disputes might ever have taken place. With this idea in mind the second generation of trans-humanists try to theorise the pioneering scientific inquiries but by considering the theological relevance of the discussion.

7. Conclusion

The fundamental insight of this chapter is that the ideal of 'economy and coherence' was radicalised in the New Atheist movement to the point that Ockham's Razor cuts off any supernatural cause and design for the sake of coherence and simplicity of a scientific theory which is a theoretical attempt to capture as much as possible of nature.²⁷ But this radicalisation is not an inherent part of the scientific theory of evolution. It has been ideologically attached to that theory and mistakenly taken for granted.

²⁷ The fact that 'Ockham's razor', which was originally an argument for the existence of God and is today deployed as a metaphor for scientific methods, reveals a great deal about the historical evolution of the meaning of science.

Chapter Five

Tourist Atheists as Players

1. Introduction

Considering late modern conditions, we need to split between *homo faber* (man the creator) and *homo ludens* (man the player). *Homo faber* as articulated by Hanna Arendt and Max Scheler is man who controls nature through creating tools. That is what we have called the extension of the nominalist doctrine of the primacy of the will. The final ideal of *homo faber* is gaining the god-like power of creation. In contrast, *homo ludens*, the term coined by Johan Huizinga, is about possession of god's singularity which is the extension of the nominalist doctrine of this-ness (*haecceitas*) in modern times. Accordingly, the God of *homo ludens* has no external aim – or rather, the aim is He Himself. The same is true for the man who has been created in the image and likeness of this God. Bauman puts it this way: “man does not play ‘in order to’” (Bauman, 1994: p. 142). In other words, playing is a goal in itself. For such a man, the ‘obligatory play’ or ‘play on command’ is meaningless (Bauman, 1994: p. 143). *Homo ludens* seeks freedom and aimless wandering. No wonder, then, that for him this ‘playing ability’ is the dividing line between man and other creatures.

Tourist atheists are examples of *homo ludens*. They see the world as a large buffet, from each item of which they take some pleasure. That is to say, the aim is no longer considered to be something external (in the temple of the universe) but it is the internal pleasure (see chapter two). In this chapter I will try to explore the idea of 'tourist atheists as players', mainly through the idea's first public appearance in the works of Alain de Botton. In the next chapter, I will deal with the theological relevance of this idea.

Today, de Botton is the face of tourist atheism because he has successfully publicised its core idea – the atheistic deconstruction of religion. He has pursued this goal through the media of self-help books (e.g. *Religion for Atheists*, 2012), documentaries and lectures which target a public audience. Below, I will try to clarify the meaning of the controversial term '*atheism 2.0*' which represents de Botton's version of tourist atheism. After that, I will show how atheism 2.0 is embedded in the whole works and ideas of de Botton, and I will argue that 'tourism' is the keyword for de Botton's ideas in general. So, we need to interpret his perspective on religion against the backdrop of his version of touristic individualism which is most evident in three of his books: *The Consolations of Philosophy* (2000), *Status Anxiety* (2004) and *Art as Therapy* (2013). Accordingly, I will show that de Botton's point of departure is the everyday anxiety of the modern subject which is related to one's status in the social hierarchy. Trying to build a shelter for the dignity of the atomised modern individual, de Botton found the answer in treating different areas of human culture (philosophy, architecture, art,

sexual relationships and even religion) as distinctive buffets full of useful items for the individual's consolation. This kind of deconstruction of cultural heritage led him to a modern form of hedonism, or as he calls it, *Bohemianism* (de Botton, 2004: pp. 275-303).

2. Atheism 2.0

What is atheism 2.0? Atheism 2.0 is a newly-emerged movement which gained attention after the publication of *Religion for Atheists* (2012) by Alain de Botton.²⁸ The fundamental idea of 'atheism 2.0' is not to reject religion as a whole. Conversely, it deconstructs religion and sees it not as a *true* wisdom but as a *useful* doctrine (de Botton, 2012; Dworkin, 2013). Thus, one can reject the central tenets of religions such as the idea of a God, afterlife, salvation, heavens and hell, but still benefit from the advantageous worldly sides of them; for example, a temple as a place to gather and sing together, a beneficial educational system, methods of giving effective speeches, or popular religious art (de Botton, 2012: pp. 101-162 and 208-245). In *Religion for Atheists* (2012), de Botton approached religions as repositories of clever concepts and ideas with which "we can try to assuage a few of the most persistent and unattended ills of secular life" (de Botton, 2012: p. 13). Thus, de Botton invited atheists not to be afraid of religion and instead to try to occupy its beneficial aspects for their own well-being.

²⁸ The focus here will be on that book as the central text of 'atheism 2.0' and some other lectures and texts by de Botton (de Botton, 2011, 2012 and 2013a). In the near future we should expect more on 'atheism 2.0' but now we are at the very dawn of this genre.

If we assume, de Botton says, that religions are man-made doctrines, we therefore need to find out what their functions were for our ancestors. The main functions of religion for de Botton are those which serve two major needs of individuals. The first is “the need to live in a community in harmony” far from selfish impulses, and the second is the “need to cope with terrifying degrees of pain” arising from our vulnerability to failures (de Botton, 2012: p. 12). The main barrier to such aforementioned harmony is what Auguste Comte called ‘egoism’. That is to say, we need to stop being romantic about the nature of man. Man, for de Botton as well as Comte, is narcissistic, jealous, spiteful, promiscuous and aggressive (de Botton, 2012: p. 58). So, today, the relationship between man and society is ceaselessly problematic. The problem is that “expressed freely, certain of our impulses would irreparably fracture our societies” (de Botton, 2012: p. 58). Therefore, modern individualism has become the main barrier to the happiness of the individual. But we know that pre-modern religions used to make up some rituals which would mediate between the individual and the group. Those rituals used to facilitate the process of entering a person into the group by honouring and at the same time taming the egocentric demands of him or her (de Botton, 2012: pp. 58-9). Thus, the Jewish *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony or the Medieval *Feast of Fools* were rituals to assuage the internal and external tensions of man in a group. This is what we really lack in modern, secular life. De Botton, correctly, asks what prevents us from reproducing such rituals to cope with the problematic situation of the modern individual. Or, in our terms, why do we no longer play that game? In response, he

rejects any conception which believes in the sacred/God-given origin of those games: “Early Christianity was itself highly adept at appropriating the good ideas of others, aggressively subsuming countless pagan practices which modern atheists now tend to avoid in the mistaken belief that they are indelibly Christian” (de Botton, 2012: p. 15). In fact, he tries to “reverse the process of religious colonization” by reclaiming those games and separating them from the ‘bad odours of religion’ – Nietzsche’s term (de Botton, 2012: p. 14). Subsequently, for instance, de Botton’s suggestion for the replacement of those religious rituals is a secular, pseudo-ritual gathering in special restaurants at specific times of the year and meeting random strangers. This secular ritual is accompanied by collective recitals of songs and dance, etc. Additionally, in January 2012 de Botton declared that he had a plan to build a one million pound temple for atheists at the heart of London which might serve as a model for other temples for atheists’ gatherings.

The other aforementioned need of the modern individual is the urge to handle failure. In this case, for example, de Botton draws our attention to the Book of Job. That part of the Old Testament addresses a central question of human suffering: why do bad things happen to good people? The modern ‘ontologically isolated individual’ (Milbank’s useful term) tends to be more likely to blame him/herself for the miseries of life. However, the point is that the shoulders of the individual are not strong enough to bear the burden of the sufferings of life. But in that Book, God “goes on at length about how little humans know of anything. Fragile, limited creatures that they are, how can they possibly understand the

ways of God?” It continues: “given their ignorance, what right do they have to use such words as *undeserved* or *unmerited*?” (de Botton, 2012: p. 198—*ital.* original). So, religion invites the individual to see the immensity of the universe. In comparison with, for instance, the size and age of space, our sufferings seem petty and trivial. de Botton believes this would be a source of consolation for the individual. The modern subject, from the dawn of the Enlightenment, could hear the Kantian invitation to stand on their own feet. But this independence caused the malaise of the ‘lack of the reminders of the transcendent’. de Botton writes:

The signal danger of life in a godless society is that it lacks reminders of the transcendent and therefore leaves us unprepared for disappointment and eventual annihilation. When God is dead, human beings [...] are at risk of taking psychological centre stage. They imagine themselves to be commanders of their own destinies, they trample upon nature, forget the rhythms of the earth, deny death [...] until at last they must collide catastrophically with the sharp edges of reality. (de Botton, 2012: p. 200)

Thus, the second crisis of modern individualistic life is that blindness to what surpasses the individual. Again, in our terms, the rules of the games in the past were external. You could trust them because they were solid and supported by an almighty being. But now the rules of the games are determined arbitrarily. The individual autonomous subject knows that everything is entirely arbitrary and dependent on him or her.

Thus this caused a bipolar disorder in the individual – anxiety on the one hand, megalomania on the other hand. de Botton's solution to this problem is also interesting. He suggests that we use scientific achievements not only to control the world but also to help us to see what "we will *never* master" (de Botton, 2012: p. 202—*ital.* original). This can be done by showing the largest known star in our galaxy, *Eta Carinae*, which is 7,500 light years far from us, 400 times bigger than, and 4 million times as bright as, the sun. The God of the Book of Job never humiliated the believer but delicately put him in his own place. The same thing can be done through the wonder of the universe. It will be a practical solution, de Botton believes, for our megalomania, self-pity and anxiety (de Botton, 2012: p. 202). If anything went wrong during the game, we would be aware of the immense powers in the world which we can never control. This awareness will be yet another source of consolation for us.

So far, I have tried to show how de Botton, as an atheist, approaches religion. He started with two interconnected crises of the modern age: the lack of a harmonious relationship between the individual and the group on the one hand, and the ever-increasing individual anxiety/megalomania on the other. The religious-like rituals, sentiments and ideas would help us to face these crises of modernity. Briefly, he attempts to revive the clever religious ideas for a secular life and has branded these efforts 'atheism 2.0'.

3. de Botton's individual as tourist

We might wonder what de Botton's conception of the modern individual is. In this section I want to step back and put the idea of atheism 2.0 in the background of the totality of de Botton's works. I am suggesting that we can summarise the underlying thesis of his works in this statement: *the modern individual is a being whose life is a life in between and in anxiety. For that matter, he or she should seek pleasure, happiness and consolation in architecture, art, sexual relationships, philosophy and religion.* This is what I tend to call the touristic point of view which in atheism 2.0 has been extended to religion. Below, I will try to explain this basic statement in more detail.

3-1. The anxious individual

Status anxiety, which is the title of a book by de Botton (2004), is the state of ceaseless worryment about an individual's position in the social hierarchy. To put it more informally, it is a state of concern about being called a 'loser' or a 'nobody' (de Botton, 2004: p. 329). de Botton's criticism is targeted at this attachment of one's identity to his or her achievements, which are confirmed by the standards of society.

It is common to describe people who hold important positions in society as 'somebodies' and their inverse as 'nobodies' – nonsensical terms, for we are all by necessity individuals with identities and comparable claims on existence. [...] Those without status remain unseen, they are treated brusquely, their complexities are trampled upon and their identities ignored. (de Botton, 2004: p. 12)

If what Scotus called *this-ness* (*haecceitas*) is about the unique characteristics of one single individual, then being called 'nobody' would be the rejection of all the properties of that individual. Thus, de Botton's self-defined mission is to guard the dignity of the individual. Accordingly, he wants the individual to be seen in his or her own separate way of richness. He finds the roots of this lack of harmony between the needs of the individual and the demands of society in the Enlightenment's idea of democracy.

During the seventeenth century, egalitarian thinkers such as Hobbes defended the priority of the individual over the society. That is, they used to think of the individual as the authentic entity. Everything else, including the government, is based on nothing but human-made contracts. In fact, men agreed to give up some of their natural rights in exchange for security (de Botton, 2004: pp. 55-6). Thus, we can say that the Enlightenment, from the beginning, contained a spirit of equality between individuals. de Botton reports that William Thackeray in his *Book of Snobs* (1848) observed that snobs had "spread over England like the railroads. They are now known and recognized throughout an Empire on which the sun never sets" (de Botton, 2004: p. 20). But the point, for de Botton, is that the new thing was not snobbery but the spirit of equality. This spirit caused the transparency and consequent rejection of any kind of traditional "discriminatory conduct" (de Botton, 2004: p. 20). Therefore, the new problem with the 'snobs' was that they attribute one's worth and right to one's social rank (de Botton, 2004: p. 20).

What is the problem with this new spirit of equality? de Tocqueville was the first to address this issue in his hallmark *Democracy in America* (1835). Among all of his admiration for the 'new world', de Tocqueville noticed a problem with the modern, 'equal' America. That is, the spirit of equality destroyed the inequalities not necessarily in real life but in the minds of people. As such, each poor American sees himself not as a 'loser' but – as Steinbeck famously said – a “temporarily embarrassed millionaire” (Wright, 2008: p. 105). Americans, for de Tocqueville, live in their own dreams about an accessible, happy future. I should add that the Enlightenment ideal of equality between individuals is rooted in the Scotist semantic of the 'possible worlds'. That is, we are created in the image of God. So, like God, we are theoretically able to create endless conceivable worlds. And furthermore, “we have an obligation to explore those unrealised possibilities” (Fuller, 2012). This religiously inspired obligation reinterpreted the idea of the *possible* which accompanied the transformation of the traditional *person* into the Scotist *individual* (see chapters two and six). Therefore, modern individuals became theoretically equal, or rather, equal in hoping for another possible, better world with prosperity and happiness. de Botton believes:

Democracies, however, had dismantled every barrier to expectation. All members of the community felt themselves *theoretically equal*, even when they lacked the means to achieve material equality. “In America,” wrote Tocqueville, “I never met a citizen too poor to cast a glance of hope and

envy toward the pleasures of the rich.” (de Botton, 2004: p. 59—*ital. mine*)

The hope for the other possible worlds was the motor-engine of modern capitalism. But at the same time the concrete reality never could keep pace with the changes in imagination and hope. So, the hope for another possible world became the source not only of ever more greed but also of endless dissatisfaction about the present situation. This caused a state of anxiety and what de Botton calls “the strange melancholy often haunting inhabitants of democracies”. Consequently, for instance, “in America, suicide is rare, but I am told that madness is commoner than anywhere else” (de Botton, 2004: pp. 57-8). Since our goals determine what must be counted as our failures, ever increasing expectations along with a limited lifetime and material resources causes great humiliation for the individual – that is, the humiliation from which the religion protects its believers. In brief, for de Botton, we take our games more seriously than we should.

3-2. The life ‘in between’ of the individual

In summer 2009, a company which owns airports contacted de Botton and suggested he spend a week’s residence in London Heathrow. He was expected to write a treatise on airports during that time. The consequence of this collaboration was a book called *A Week at the Airport: Heathrow diaries* (2009). I want to suggest that, rather than being a mere accidental theme, the airport has a central role in de Botton’s works. de Botton believes that the airport is “the imaginative centre of

contemporary culture” (de Botton, 2010: p. 13). It is “a single place that neatly captures the gamut of themes running through our civilisation – from our faith in technology to our destruction of nature, from our interconnectedness to our romanticising of travel” (de Botton, 2010: p. 13). For example, he reports his experience of an interview with a passenger who has an ordinary, routine, boring and sometimes anxious life. David, the passenger, decided to travel to Athens with his family. de Botton describes David’s feelings in this way:

As David lifted a suitcase on to the conveyor belt, he came to an unexpected and troubling realisation: that he was bringing *himself* with him on his holiday. Whatever the qualities of the Dimitra Residence, they were going to be critically undermined by the fact that *he* would be in the villa as well. He had booked the trip in the expectation of being able to enjoy his children, his wife, the Mediterranean, some spanakopita and the Attic skies, but it was evident that he would be forced to apprehend all of these through the distorting filter of his own being, with its debilitating levels of fear, anxiety and wayward desire. (de Botton, 2010: pp. 49-50—*ital.* original)

Thus, we can say that the main problematic is the individual himself. The individual is depicted as a tourist in the terminal escaping from the boredom of everyday life toward new possibilities and new horizons of pleasure. “He had pictured himself playing with the children in the palm-lined garden and eating grilled fish and olives with Louise on the

terrace” (de Botton, 2010: p. 47). But de Botton’s subject would remain anxious and unsatisfied both before and after the travel. After returning from an adventure, travellers soon start to forget the journey and its pleasures. Concomitantly, they return to tedious, everyday life. So again they become curious about another touristic journey, a villa in Istanbul, beaches in Spain, and so on. “So we gradually return to identifying happiness with elsewhere” (de Botton, 2010: pp. 142-3). This is a Sisyphean movement between the boredom of everyday life and the hope of a touristic relief. In the airport, the screens placed at intervals imply “a feeling of infinite and immediate possibility: they suggested the ease with which we might impulsively approach a ticket desk and, within a few hours, embark for a country where the call to prayer rang out over shuttered whitewashed houses, where we understood nothing of the language”. The items on those airport screens are promising images of an alternative life and an accessible relief at a time of claustrophobia and stagnation (de Botton, 2010: p. 33).

The airport is the place which represents the tourist experience of life in two ways. First, it is the place of the detachment of the possible worlds (our hopes, dreams and fantasies) from the real world (our anxieties, depressions and everyday life). Thus the airport is the location of the double-life of the modern individual. It is the representation of the modern subject’s *life-in-between*. Second, the airport does not divide the true from the false. It is the zone which divides anxiety from consolation. It splits one condition from the other. de Botton’s subject is a tourist in a deeper sense – not only as a person who travels around, but in the fact

that his or her approach to the world is touristic. That is, he or she can see different games (the religious, philosophical, artistic or scientific game) and choose one of them or a combination of them for a while, not as an ultimate truth but as a painkiller. That is to say, the internal goal of finding consolation in a game is prior to the pilgrim-like search for *the truth*.

3-3. Games in the promenade of culture

In his book on airports, de Botton wrote about his visit to the airport bookshop. He observed something that one might correctly call the banality of the tourist experience. He saw shelves of classic novels which had been arranged according to the country in which the narrative took place (de Botton, 2010: p.76). So if you are going to Prague, you might want to choose Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, but if you are going to Istanbul, Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*²⁹ would probably be a better choice. The modern individual for de Botton is a tourist and de Botton, as a tour-guide, inhabits the airport and consults the tourists about fascinating destinations. Such a destination might be a religion, an art or a philosophical doctrine which is consoling. Or, we could say that culture is a promenade with a lot of booths and games. Accordingly, one game would be philosophy. In *The Consolations of Philosophy* (2000), de Botton says that when our heart is broken because of our lover's rejection we can find consolation in the philosophy of Schopenhauer. This philosopher taught us that "happiness was never

²⁹ The intriguing fact about Orhan Pamuk is that he is totally aware of the touristic consumption of his novels. So he established a real museum in Istanbul on the basis of the narrative of his novel.

part of the plan,” and therefore we should not be surprised by misery (de Botton, 2000: p. 196 and 198).

With regard to the question of art, de Botton in *Art as Therapy* (2013) ridicules the academic approach to art. By reviewing the outline of an academic course on Italian Renaissance art, he concludes that academics tell Renaissance artists, such as *Raphael*, that “I don’t know enough about your perspective on the problems and issues specific to your time. I’m sorry about that and I’m going to try very hard to put it right” (de Botton and Armstrong, 2013a: p. 85). But for de Botton the right question to be asked of a painter like Michelangelo is “what lessons are you trying to teach us that will help us with our lives?” (de Botton and Armstrong, 2013a: p. 87). In other words, scholars should connect the spirit of those masterpieces to the “psychological frailties” of their audience (de Botton and Armstrong, 2013a: p. 86). Still the other game in the promenade of culture is dedicated to cartoon, comedy and humour. By showing the lack of harmony in society, these cultural products “reassure us that there are others in the world no less envious or socially fragile than we are” (de Botton, 2004: p. 196). Thus these humours are also the sources of consolation for our damaged souls.

Ipsa facto we will not be surprised when we return to de Botton’s odd way of approaching religious rituals and sentiments, as described at the beginning of this chapter. The idea of atheism 2.0 is inextricably entangled with this type of touristic way of approaching the world. Thus, religion is also nothing but another game in the promenade of our cultural heritage.

4. Tourist atheists as players

We need to return to the idea of *homo ludens* (man the player). What we have called tourist atheism is one of the instances of *man the player*. The history of *man the player* goes back to the *flâneurs* in Paris from the middle of the nineteenth century. They were people who used to wander without aim. They stopped once in a while to look around but idly (Bauman, 1994: p. 142), and they had a lot of time. There were even rumours about flâneurs taking turtles for a walk. A flâneur, Walter Benjamin reported, is always in “full possession of his individuality” (Benjamin, 1999: p. 429) and for this reason Jonsson called this type of man the ‘medium of modernity’ (Jonsson, 2013: p. 146). Flâneurs also have three other characteristics: feelings of indecision, daydreaming and love of the city (Benjamin, 1999: pp. 422-427). This last characteristic is important. Flâneurisme is specifically about the city – it did not appear in the countryside. Benjamin believed that the arcades of Paris gave birth to flâneurisme and also that it disappeared when, at the time of Baron Haussmann (during the rule of Napoleon III), the old medieval arcades and small streets were replaced with new boulevards and highways.

While Walter Benjamin (1999) stopped at that historical moment, Zygmunt Bauman (1994) followed the history of flâneurisme into our contemporary moment. According to Bauman, mass industries founded the modern urge for wandering and took advantage of this idea by reproducing it in artificial mini-cities – i.e. malls, shopping centres and Disneyland (Bauman, 1994: p. 154). Concomitantly, they have tried to blur the line between *entertainment* and *shopping*. Thus, the *flâneur* has

turned into the *shopper*. The characteristic of these mini-cities is that they are “the world made to the flâneur’s measure” (Bauman, 1994: p. 150). Bauman concludes his discussion about neo-flâneurs by reproducing famous passages from Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930):

The *flâneur* wanted to play his game at leisure; we are forced to do so [...]. In Baudelaire’s or Benjamin’s view the dedication to mobile fantasy should lie on the shoulders of the *flâneur* like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (Bauman, 1994: p. 153—*ital.* original)

Tourist atheism (and atheism 2.0) is understandable only through its connection to this neo-flâneurisme. Atheism 2.0 is an attempt to open the doors of religion to *man the player*,³⁰ and it is a kind of game which does not admit any mystery, red line or order either from God or from pilgrims. The game is real when it does not accept the orders of the self-proclaimed authorities, and when the gamer is the only one to make up the rules. So in this sense religion can also be (and should be) a field of atheistic games.

For de Botton this game is more psychological and results in a kind of postmodern hedonism which he called *Bohemianism*. de Botton likes the audacity of the members of the bohemian movement of the nineteenth century: those who decided to be different in their own way by believing in the inferiority of tradition and their stress on the superiority of

³⁰ I use the terms ‘player’ and ‘tourist’ in the same sense.

the individual (de Botton, 2004: p. 317). de Botton quotes Victor Hugo in the preface to *Hernani* (1830): “No more rules [...] for talent to surrender personal originality would be like God becoming a servant” (de Botton, 2004: p. 317). So de Botton tries to deconstruct the rules of art, philosophy and religion, for example, by attributing that ‘originality’ to the individual (and for the sake of making a psychological consolation for the atheist individual).

The difference between the neo-flâneurisme which Bauman identified and neo-bohemianism which de Botton recommends is that, at first glance, the latter does not strike us as consumerist. Even one might say that de Botton invites atheists to forget the hierarchy of modern life which is based more on economic achievements, and like Bohemians he defends limited games of hierarchy. For example, in the eyes of a bohemian those who write better poems deserve a higher status in the group. de Botton’s project has a bohemian spirit. He tries to define smaller circles of truth (artistic, philosophical, etc.) and tells us that one can find some ‘breathing space’ in those circles.

Philosophy, art, politics, Christianity and bohemia did not seek to do away with a status hierarchy; they attempted to institute new kinds of hierarchy based on sets of values unrecognized by, and critical of, those of the majority. [...] They have provided us with a set of persuasive and consoling reminders that there is more than one way [...] of succeeding at life. (de Botton, 2004: p. 329)

The crux of the issue is that under this claim of supporting the individual's dignity by building small shelters for him or her, there is an appeal for the commodification of philosophical doctrines, artistic masterpieces, classic novels and religious rituals. The castration of their principles would be the price of turning philosophy, art and religion into collections of therapeutic tips. Through this castration they would be ready to be consumed as any other commodity.

5. Conclusion

In brief, de Botton suggests to us that modern man's perpetual anxiety is owing to the fact that the games of the pilgrims are no longer entertaining for us. So, we can return to that promise once more and revive this dignity through defining smaller games which are better able to include everyone – and no one would be the 'loser' in such a world. However, I have argued that this idea resulted in the commodification of different areas of culture including religion. Thus, one might say that in the second round of the disenchantment of the world, *man the player* tries to deconstruct religion or even very modern philosophy to address the individual's wishes and interests. Tourist atheists, in de Botton's version, should wander like flâneurs in the atheistic Disneyland of culture. So he or she might want to adopt some ideas from Judaism along with some consolations from Wittgenstein's philosophy and probably some inspiration from staring at René Magritte's *The Castle of the Pyrenees*. For the tourist atheist, this is the authentic mission of the individual.

Chapter Six

Tourist Atheists' Religion as Act

1. Introduction

In what follows I will explain some ideas that have been touched upon in the last chapter. Previously, I have tried to describe the public face of tourist atheism (Alain de Botton's atheism 2.0) but the theological relevance of those ideas remains to be scrutinised. I have claimed that tourist atheism is the extension of the Scotist doctrine of *this-ness* or *haecceitas* (see chapter two). Here, I will try to show how the idea of *God who acts* or *God the player* of nominalists of the fourteenth century is implicit within the idea of tourist atheism. The focus of this chapter is on the theological shift from wisdom to will and its counterpart in modern philosophy from *truth* (Plato) to *act* (Nietzsche).³¹ Arguably, tourist atheism is more influenced by the latter, seeing an act at the centre of both myth and religion. One might say that a tourist atheist is a player who sets the rules of the game arbitrarily. I will argue that for tourist atheists the human being is created in the image and likeness of God, not

³¹ There is a subtle difference between 'act' and 'action'. These two terms represent two ways of thinking about the creation. The God who acts or God the player of nominalists constantly creates from moment to moment, act by act, through repeated decisions to create. God of Aquinas, conversely, decides to create something at one moment through one whole action. God who episodically acts is God who influenced tourist atheists.

because like Him we can gain 'objective knowledge' but because we are, like Him, individuals who set the rules of the game. Therefore, while there is no criterion beyond this inner goal of fulfilment of the individual-sovereign's will, the religious claim of truth cannot be deemed to rival another truth (e.g. scientific truth). In this way, religion is not considered to be the enemy but a different mode of approaching the world which our ancestors devised. Therefore, *man the player (homo ludens)* also can change the rules of the religious games or make his own versions of the games. Finally, I will examine the strategies which tourist atheists adopt regarding whatever is not *logos* (i.e. myth, including religion). What I tend to call the *expropriation* of assets of religion and myth is the main strategy of tourist atheists. That is, a strategy of not engaging with religion on a normative level (through acceptance or rejection) but an anthropological way of looking at it. Doing this, one can see religion as a game set by our predecessors. This strategy, indicatively, has three major characteristics: first, rather than *knowing* something it is about *doing* something; second, it starts from the conception of the *individual in danger*; and third, it presumes that the individual-sovereign can re-assemble and re-make religion for its own purposes. In the next two sections I will first start with the theological shift from wisdom to will and then I will show its counterpart in modern philosophy.

2. The theological shift from wisdom to will

In the second chapter, I stated that the world for the touristic type of modern man is the 'chaos of the plurality of individuals'. In such a chaotic world, tourists find the Archimedean point inside the individual.

That inner element is the individual's *will* which should be strong enough that one can call it a *goal*. This image of the chaotic world, on the one hand, and the wilful man, on the other hand, has originally been shaped in the Scotist theology. The God of Thomas Aquinas was an *unmoved mover* or a 'Supreme Being' but Saint Francis and his followers (among them Scotus) "referred to God by the personal title 'Dominus Deus' or Lord God" (Oberman, 2003: p. 26). The word of this God was his deed and one needed to know God through His deeds; let us call Him '*the God who acts*'. Therefore, the act of creation by *the God who acts* depends on His hidden divine will. In the same vein, this doctrine of the primacy of the will leads us to the conclusion that divine intellect is not something in the nature of the created. The whole story of creation is comparable to playing a game. The almighty being sets the rules and other beings should play it. The rules of the game are the arbitrary decisions of that almighty being. Scotus, for instance, believed that all laws are positive, i.e. the result of a decision (Brague, 2007: p. 237). Therefore, the decision of a single being is at the centre of creation. Any question about the wisdom behind those rules would be idle. Furthermore, the creatures of such a *God* should obey Him without asking any question. Therefore, the creatures of that God should merely accept the divine commands (Brague, 2007: p. 237).

Scotus's description of *the God who acts* or *God the player* led scholars to the hypothesis that Scotist theology led to the 'possible worlds' semantics, which were adopted by Leibniz in the seventies-

century (see: Normore, 2003; Knuuttila, 1986).³² Distinguishing between God's intellect and His will, Scotus suggested that the divine intellect "surveys all the possible worlds and the divine will chooses among them" (Normore, 2003: p. 154). Thus, God could have created other worlds or other sets of rules and other games but He created this one. The important point which derives from this argument is that 'the possibility of being' is the primary constituent of whatever *is*, and furthermore this is the 'real basis' for the univocal concept of being. In other words, the non-actual things are in principle identifiable and since God's intellect gives them the right to be, and man is created in the image of God, man's intellect can therefore also identify the possible but non-actual things (Knuuttila, 1986: p. 208). That is to say, man can set new rules for new games and in doing so reproduce God's characteristic of singularity and sovereignty.

In brief, for *via moderna*, God was a *person who acts or plays* (Oberman, 2003: p. 26). The parallel of God the player is the man who plays, *homo ludens*, or the *individual-sovereign* about whom I will write below. This man follows the inner rules which have been set by his or her *will*. More importantly, nothing beyond that *will* can help us to find our way in this eternally chaotic world.³³ In the modern time, a shift also occurred

³² For an opposing argument see: Wyatt, N. 2000, 'Did Duns Scotus Invent Possible Worlds Semantics?', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 78: 2, 196-212.

³³ This *will* in its human version can be easily translated into *imagination*. This is what Petrarch (as a Renaissance figure who first anticipated the concept of tourism) did in the first half of his life. He was obsessed with poetry but poetry for him was not a way to show sentiment. On the contrary, it was a way to overcome his inner passions. By suppressing these passions he was hoping to allow room for the iron fist of human will, which should play the role of an inner goal (Gillespie, 2008: pp. 52-5). In the second half of his life, Petrarch noted religion but not for the sake of any spiritual feelings. There are even, Gillespie claims, persuasive arguments against his belief in Christianity (Gillespie,

from the Platonic *knowing-centred* point of view (i.e. pilgrim ontology) to the Nietzschean *doing-centred* outlook (i.e. tourist ontology) which resonated with that theological shift. In the next section, I will briefly review the expansion of this shift from *truth* to *act* in modern philosophy. The latter, I will suggest, is the main motif of tourist atheism.

3. The philosophical shift from truth to act

Richard Rorty, in a paper entitled *Pragmatism and Romanticism* (2007b), stated that “at the heart of romanticism is the thesis [...] that reason can only follow paths that the imagination has broken” and it can “only rearrange elements that the imagination has created” (Rorty, 2007b: p. 112). Saying this, he put forward a division between two kinds of myths which were the basis of two kinds of philosophical quests. The first myth was founded by Plato’s quest for something authentic that is not human-made. Following that myth, the mission of philosophy became about helping us get back to that *authentic origin*. Thus, this is a myth and Plato was a successful mythmaker – he made an intellectual project for centuries after himself. This goal was the shared element of Greek philosophy, Christianity and the Scientific Revolution. These were respectively about finding the truth, seeking God and getting into the mind of God. As I have argued above, this temptation of finding god-like power to control nature and society is at the heart of pilgrim atheism as well. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche raged against that myth of finding

2008: p. 56). Religion for Petrarch was important because of the way it approaches the individual in this world. Following the Scotist line of argument, Petrarch needed to base theoretical reason on an act (the adoption of poetry and religion). That act was based on premises that can never be tested. In this way he reproduced the shift from God’s wisdom of *via antiqua* to God’s will of *via moderna* in his works. He did not seek the divine, ‘objective’ point of view, but the divine ‘subjective’ *decisionism*.

“unmediated access to the real” which he believed was at the heart of both German idealism and British empiricism (Rorty, 2007b: p. 110).

The other myth which Rorty has prefers originated in the Romantic Movement. This myth stands against the Platonic quest for the logical, indubitable and neutral point (Rorty, 2007b: p. 118). Its central question is about “how human beings continually strive to overcome the human past in order to create a better human future” (Rorty, 2007b: p. 118), but there is no necessary progress imaginable in this new scheme: neither any objective goal, nor any pilgrimage. Moreover, any achievement in this way is a result of using the power of imagination³⁴.

Around the 1950's and 1960's, another wave of philosophical projects which considered the mythical foundations of philosophy happened³⁵ (McMullin, 1988: p. 1). The epistemologists and philosophers of science started to ask about the meanings of rationality and its relationship with science (McMullin, 1988; Wilson, 1970; Hollis and Lukes, 1984). Bernstein, for his part, described that mythical foundation as a tale, story or narrative that every philosopher makes up and that “has its own heroes and villains” (Bernstein, 1988: p. 189). By saying this Bernstein and his fellow philosophers used to put an *act* (i.e. making a myth) at the very basis of every philosophical enquiry. Thus, in an anti-Platonic time, they started to give priority to *doing* in contrast with *knowing*.

³⁴ The central text of this anti-Platonic myth is Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (1821) in which Shelley considered poetry as the centre of knowledge.

³⁵ Mainly after the publication of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

Accordingly, the two sides of this spectrum are the *truth-centred* enterprises of Ancient Greek philosophers, Scholastics, fathers of the Enlightenment and pilgrim atheists on the one hand, and the *imagination-centred* mission of Romantics, poets, and postmodern thinkers on the other hand. By replacing imagination with truth, the process of secularisation would be complete. In other words, not only we will give up on the idea of God the creator but also we will overcome the desire for the “non-linguistic access to the real” – the Platonic myth (Rorty, 2007b: p. 119). Hence, the focus would be on the subjective goal and condition of the individual. The progress would not be considered to be from the false to the true, but from a bad condition (i.e. the past) to a better condition (i.e. the future).

I suggest that this transition from *knowing* something to *doing* something lies at the heart of tourist atheism. That is to say, it more concerns about the manipulation of society by anticipation of a better future for the individual. I need to specify what this individual is and how it relates to that theological background. In the next section, this will be explained by defining the term *individual-sovereign*.

4. The individual-sovereign

For the Franciscans of the fourteenth century there were three sovereigns: the divine, the state and the individual (Milbank, 2012). While the Franciscan idea of the divine’s absolute power survived in the modern time and constituted the modern scientific point of view (Funkenstein, 1986: chapter 3), the idea of the absolute sovereignty of the state has

been reproduced in the works of Hobbes and Kant (Milbank, 2012: p. 205). But what about the third sovereign or the *individual-sovereign*?

I want to argue that this individual-sovereign is at the heart of the other two sovereignties. Let us start from this claim that the Franciscan conception of the individual and its modern lineage was a revolutionary break with the medieval conception of the individual. Consider the case of the human right:

The medieval attribution of an 'exercise right' was rather a grant to the right kind of person to exercise according to right judgment a certain restricted authority in specific circumstances and with respect to certain intrinsic relationships in which he or she stood to certain other people. (Milbank, 2012: p. 215)

But this conception of the human right has completely changed with the shifting image of the individual from that medieval image to the Franciscan image of the individual-sovereign. When God is considered to be a will-full being and He is God because of this will, and when man is created in the image and likeness of God, as a result man is considered to be a will-full being as well. Essentially, the crucial element in any individual (either the divine individual or the earthly one) is that *will*. Milbank reports that Franciscans used to believe that whatever they owned was merely on loan, and therefore they used to live in poverty, but the hidden assumption under this poverty was their *absolute ownership of the self* (Milbank, 2012: p. 223). As such, in a very radical and

unmediated way they owned themselves, their bodies and their lives. That is because they were created in the image of God and they possessed that *will* which is the most inalienable thing and the divine essence inside man. Milbank suggests that this self-possession foreshadowed the modern idea of the human right as 'possessive individualism' (Milbank, 2012: pp. 323-4).

This radical break constituted a new conception of God as the wishful being and man as the individual-sovereign whose main characteristic is his or her self-possession. Even the ideal state in the Franciscan-Hobbsean lineage is a regime with an absolute power, but its power is there to secure that private freedom and property. So, one can conclude that the central element in this scheme is the will of the individual. This *will* originates from God's will – man inherits it from God, and finally the state is there to secure it in society. Viewed in that light, we can say that the Franciscans of the fourteenth century were more concerned with the divine-sovereign – Hobbes and Kant were concerned about the state-sovereign but tourist atheism adopts the individual-sovereign of this Franciscan trinity.

Let us conclude the discussion at this point: first, we showed a shift in the scholastic tradition from *God's wisdom* to *God's will* and we showed its counterpart in modern philosophy from *truth* to *act*. In this section, we tried to show the second underlying assumption of tourist atheism which is the conception of the individual-sovereign and its theological relevance. As I will show in the next sections, tourist atheists start their projects with the problematic of *the individual in danger*, and

end up in *the expropriation of the assets of religions* for the sake of the well-being of the individual.

5. The discourse of the individual in danger

The point of departure of tourist atheism is a pathological description which I have called the discourse of *the individual in danger*. Two main figures of this discourse are Hans Blumenberg and Peter Sloterdijk. The first is more concerned about the *self-protection* of the individual while the latter is more obsessed with the individual's *self-assertion*. Nevertheless, both try to take advantage of the irrational (in the Weberian sense of irrationality, i.e. myth, religion, etc.) for their emancipatory project.

5.1. A search for breathing space for the individual

Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) is well known for *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1983). It served as a long reply to *Meaning in History* (1949) by Karl Löwith (1897-1973). Thus, let us start with Löwith, whose project was showing how the philosophy of history as the “systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a *principle*” is *dependent* on the theology of history (Löwith, 1949: p. 1-2—*ital.* mine). For this goal, he moved backwards in history from Burckhardt, Marx, Hegel and Comte to Joachim, Orosius and the Bible. Briefly, the thrust of his argument is that the philosophy of history is possible when we have access to this underlying *principle*. But at the same time, that principle is only achievable when there is a goal for us. Christians used to be prepared with such an eschatological goal but this is not true today.

Löwith believed that the philosophy of history *depended* (and is *based*) on the theology of history (Löwith, 1949). One can argue that Löwith was more on Burckhardt's side of the argument, who believed that the "philosophy and theology of history have to deal with beginning and ultimate end, and the profane historian cannot deal with either of them" (Löwith, 1949: p. 21). The only accessible thing for the historian, Löwith thought, is "man, as he is and was and ever shall be, striving, acting, suffering" (Löwith, 1949: p. 21). Thus, the truly modern historian has one mission: to focus on the needs of the individual by linking up a number of observations to a series of random thoughts (Löwith, 1949: p. 20). This is a radical rejection of any systematic thinking that deals with the beginning and the end, but for Löwith, modernity is more about a kind of suspension and lack of certainty.

Several years after the publication of Löwith's book, Hans Blumenberg criticised Löwith's scheme in several ways (see: Wallace, 1981). His main point was that interpreting this structural similarity between the theology and philosophy of history as a type of '*dependence*' is a misreading of history because one is presuming that religion originally possessed that structure. Thus, one presupposes that religion is independent of history (Blumenberg, 1983: pp. 8-9). In the rest of the book, Blumenberg tried to reject the attribution of such independence to religion. He simultaneously believed that this problem arises from a deeper misconception of history. According to that misconception, there is something authentic in history. Even the Renaissance figures made a similar mistake by defining their project as the recurrence of a structure

that has already disappeared (Blumenberg, 1983: p. 8), while this presupposition made them blind toward the uniqueness of the Renaissance (i.e. the Renaissance as the historical individual). The same is true for modernity. Blumenberg defends the legitimacy of modernity. He supports the uniqueness of the modern approach, but how can we justify the undeniable similarities between the structures of the Christian faith and the modern approaches? Blumenberg suggests that this is the recurrent process of occupation and reoccupation of the concepts – not only that the moderns borrowed some ideas from Christians, but the early Christians also did the same with pagan philosophies. Therefore, the right term to describe this process is not ‘dependence’ but ‘occupation’ – and reoccupation (Blumenberg, 1983: part I). Blumenberg continued this thesis in his *Work on Myth* (1985) in which he used the term ‘Darwinism of words’ for this process of occupation and reoccupation. In fact, the most interesting thesis of his comes after the clarification of his approach to historical changes, when he suggests that we can intentionally reinterpret (then reoccupy) old myths for protecting the modern man by making ‘breathing space’ for him or her.

Myth, for Blumenberg, is the “archaic accomplishment of reason” (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 166). Thus there is no contradiction between logos and myth because “[m]yth itself is a piece of high-carat ‘work of logos’” (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 12). This is a way to reduce what Blumenberg called the *absolutism of reality* which is the bitterness that we feel when we cannot control our conditions of existence (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 3-16). Contrary to this is myth, which is the result of thousands of years of

‘storytelling’. Myth is the manifestation of ‘overcoming’ or ‘gaining distance’ from that bitterness (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 16).

The problem is that the modern age exposed men to ‘the absolutism of reality’ by melting away those myths. This led us to the perpetual situation of *existential anxiety* which is “related to the unoccupied horizons of the possibilities of what may come at one” (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 6). Subsequently, at this juncture only myth can make a protective shell for modern man. This thesis reminds us of a classic study by Paul Veyne, the title of which is absolutely illustrative: *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* (1988). The question is, were the ancient Greeks such credulous people who used to think that if they climbed Mount Olympus they would see Zeus sitting there with a thunderbolt at his right hand? Answering that question, Veyne started with the same presumption as Blumenberg’s – that myth and logos are not contradictory (Veyne, 1988: p. 1) – and concluded that myths were certainly not doubted (Veyne, 1988: p. 17), and that myth goes beyond true and false. That is to say, the question of the validity of myth never occurred to the ancient Greeks (Veyne, 1988: p. 23). Finally, myth was considered to be something like the historical, contemporary novel. The audience of modern historical novels is certain that the author’s imagination is based on true events; for instance, take the love between Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine. Those two figures were real, and the love story was also real, but this does not mean that every single dialogue that the author writes in the novel is historically precise. Substantively, these are the details which are merely ‘editorial’ (Veyne,

1988: p. 21). More or less, the same is true for myths. The function of the mythical stories was to explain the beginning and the end of things (Veyne, 1988: chapter 2) – answering questions that no one can answer but which exist in man's mind (and will exist forever). So a city *does* exist and its name *is* Athens but where does the city's name come from? Who built it? Why here but not somewhere else? These could be the questions for mythical contemplation.

In Blumenberg's terms, myth is a tool for "maintaining the position in the face of an overpowering reality" (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 7). Thus if we want to maintain our position, and do not give up in the face of existential anxiety, we need those myths which have survived the long process of 'natural (historical?) selection'. By prescribing the wielding of mythical stories for the moderns, Blumenberg based his theory on an *act* – he founded his theory on the premise that its validity can never be tested.

Blumenberg in *Work on Myth* (1985) went through the details of myths and how we can take advantage of them. I particularly want to raise one of his points: the division between the 'fundamental' myth and the 'original' myth. He believed that the pursuit of the latter is as wrong as the pursuit of anything 'authentic' – in other words, such a thing does not exist. But the fundamental myth (*Grundmythos*) is the myth that "remains visible at the end". This is the myth which is "able to satisfy the receptions and expectations" (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 175). That fundamental myth for him is the myth of Prometheus, the fire thief. Why?

If Zeus had wanted to drive the humans to despair so as to make them bring about their own obliteration from the cosmos, Prometheus had frustrated this by giving them a *reality*, fire, and an *illusion*, 'blind hope.' The illusionary element points to the fact that it could not be a question purely of making the humans happy; they were deceived about their *status naturalis* [state of nature], and that also was misfortune. (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 310—*ital.* mine)

Through this myth, and the metaphors of *fire* and *blind hope*, human beings remain in a sort of harmony an existential situation which enables them to remain hopeful but not to the point that they completely ignore the discontents of life. This myth can be extended to the modern era because it will restrain human beings from looking the harsh reality of existence in the eye. But it still does not make them naïvely optimistic about their 'objective existential state'.

In his theory, Blumenberg took up a protective position toward the modern individual. He tried to keep modern man from the malaise of modern life (and its most destructive form, 'the absolutism of reality') through the revival of the thousands-year-old myths. The tourist atheists who support this negative function of myths consider modern man as *homo pictor* or man the painter, who draws the images of the horrible, unknown things around himself on the wall of the cave. So, through representing, recreating and also controlling those dangers on the wall he can maintain his own self-esteem. That is to say, he considers them in this way. But there are other ways of approaching the irrational elements

of culture, such as seeking the positive goal of self-assertion. The most recent instance of this position is Peter Sloterdijk's thesis of considering religions as *spiritual regiments*. To use his own metaphor, he supports *homo artista*, or the man in training.

5.2. Religions do not exist

Peter Sloterdijk's project is to rotate the modern cognitive stage ninety degrees to the point that religious, spiritual and ethical issues can be seen from a new angle (Sloterdijk, 2012: p. 9 and 2013a: p. 5). This new angle is represented in the subtitle of his *The Art of Philosophy: Wisdom as a Practice* (2012). But the main text for this project is his *You Must Change Your Life* (2013a) in which he has criticised *New Atheism* for its 'simplistic' doctrines (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 5). For him the point is that *New Atheists* share an idea with religious believers – the very idea of the 'existence of religion'. Instead, Sloterdijk supports the curious thesis that religions do not exist (Sloterdijk, 2013a: pp. 83-105). What do exist are "misinterpreted anthropotechnic practice systems" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 84). The term 'anthropotechnic' for him is the sets of rules that we make up and through them we mould our inward and outward behaviour (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 84). Thus, a human being for him is a self-forming animal and for the same reason there is no difference between two thousand-year-old Christianity or Sant-Simonism: both are simply anthropotechnic practice systems.

Whether Christian or non-Christian, all of them are both materially and formally nothing other than complexes of

inner and outer actions, symbolic practice systems and protocols for regulating traffic with higher stressors and ‘transcendental’ powers –in short, forms of anthropotechnics in the implicit mode. (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 87)

In recent times, he believes, we have concentrated on *homo faber* at the cost of ignoring *homo religiosus* (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 3) – the man who changes his life through some surreal and spiritual exercises and rituals. In the same vein, religion for Sloterdijk is not a bad idea but an anthropological phenomenon which persists to the point that man exists.

The question he raised is whether we need to reject all of those spiritual exercises, as *New Atheists* do. The game of supporting or rejecting religion is exactly the stage that Sloterdijk wants to rotate. He suggests that the true dichotomy is not between the believers and the non-believers but between the *trained* and the *untrained* (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 3). He is concerned with the fate of the individual in an age of disbelief. That is, if religion is a system of spiritual exercise for man, what would happen for the modern individual without any religion/spiritual exercise? He does not want to see human beings lose their sense of perfect and imperfect in an age of disbelief. If God does not exist, this does not mean that we cannot spiritually ‘get in shape’. We can arguably see the Nietzschean spirit in Sloterdijk’s words, to whom he dedicated a whole chapter: “that God is supposedly dead is irrelevant in this context. With or without God, each person will only get as far as their form carries them” (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 39). Viewed in that light, the discourse of *the individual in danger* shows itself when Sloterdijk talks about the untrained

individual and its wickedness. Those people do not belong to our time. As he believes: “Just as the nineteenth century stood cognitively under the sign of *production* and the twentieth under that of *reflexivity*, the future should present itself under the sign of the *exercise*” (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 4—*ital.* mine).

We might wonder what this prescribed exercise should look like. Sloterdijk does not hesitate to suggest a physical interpretation of the exercise, such as sport. He writes about the modern religion of neo-Olympism which was established by de Coubertin (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 88). This religion was at the heart of the modern revival of the Olympics, yet it was later forgotten. This universal symposium of sportsmen was about to “reconcile the torn ‘society’ of the day” (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 91). More substantively, what makes it interesting is that we know the athletes of ancient Greece were not only similar to gods but that this resemblance could result in a kind of identity (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 26). Therefore, de Coubertin’s clever idea was that the individual athlete could become a god (or Jesus: half-god, half-man) even today, and this is achievable through various exercises. These athlete-gods become role models of modern society. Their images and statues will invite people to a moral principle mentioned in a poem by Rilke: “*you must change your life*”.³⁶

³⁶ Rilke composed this poem after seeing a beheaded torso of Apollo:
We never knew his head and all the light
That ripened in his fabled eyes. But
his torso still glows like a gas lamp dimmed
in which his gaze, lit long ago
holds fast and shines. Otherwise the surge
of the breast could not blind you, nor a smile
run through the slight twist of the loins
toward that centre where procreation thrived.
Otherwise this stone would stand deformed and curt

If we rotate the stage with Sloterdijk's version of tourist atheism, we can go further than finding *consolation* in religious rituals (as de Botton suggests) or redefining the old myths for the present day (as intended by Blumenberg). Sloterdijk tries to unearth the technics that old religions have used and the ways that they have built various systems. His project is to equip the modern man with those technics, so that religion can return to its real realm of anthropology and also so that the modern man will be able to build new anthropotechnic systems according to his new needs. In brief, the goal of Sloterdijk's project is more like Petrarch's. Sloterdijk tries to empower the modern individual by technics of self-transformation and giving form to one's life. Thus for him, man is the self-forming animal.

6. The strategy of expropriation

The malaise of modern life for de Botton is 'status anxiety'. Blumenberg, for his part, saw the danger in the 'absolutism of reality,' while Sloterdijk recognised the individual's wickedness and the 'lack of training' as the source of crisis. Although these figures have defined the danger in different ways, they all started from a discourse of *the individual in danger*. More importantly, they followed one general strategy – to protect and emancipate the individual. As I mentioned above, the way

under the shoulders' transparent plunge
 and not glisten just like wild beasts' fur
 and not burst forth from all its contours
 like a star: for there is no place
 that does not see you. You must change your life.

The poem begins with admitting that we cannot see the light of the eyes of Apollo because the torso is beheaded but we are able to see his well-shaped body which is enough for us. This metaphor is true for religion. That is to say, however the religious wisdom is not valid anymore (and God is dead), but still religion gives us some models of spiritual practice (Sloterdijk, 2013a: chapter 1).

tourist atheists approach religion is understandable under the category of the strategy of *expropriation*. That is, not entering the game of rejection/acceptance but seeing religion as an anthropological phenomenon. Doing this, one can see religion as a game set by our predecessors. Thus there is no doubt that we can do the same thing – i.e., make a religious game. This expropriation of the assets of religion³⁷ can be the gamesome search of the consolation in the buffet of old religions (de Botton) but also can find the deeper goal of overcoming and redefining it for the well-being of the modern man (Blumenberg). The extreme point of this spectrum is the rejection of the very existence of religions. In this final point, religion completely disappears through reinterpretation of it as a set of human-made anthropotechnics, or arbitrary decisions (Sloterdijk). Here, not only does the proselytising mission of atheism (saving men from religious ignorance) become irrelevant but, furthermore, participation in any acceptance/rejection game seems self-defeating. Therefore, the idea is to use those anthropotechnics in new games for the goal of self-fulfilment.

Accordingly, the image of *God who plays* ended up in the conception of a man who should play and set the rules of the game arbitrarily. This is probably the final point of the process of secularisation: when a tourist atheist does not reject religion but alternatively considers the arbitrariness of the rules of the game and expropriates its technics. In this way man becomes god-like by reproducing God's sovereignty. For tourist atheists this sovereignty is attainable first through this

³⁷ This also recalls the motto of the Marxists of the Russian Revolution of 1917: "expropriate the expropriators" or "*loot the looters*".

consciousness that any religion is based on an act, and then by the knowledge that one can remake religion, reassemble its elements, or reset the rules of the religious game according to one's will.

7. Conclusion

A few months after the death of Richard Rorty (1931-2007), his final essay, *The Fire of Life* (2007) was published in the *Poetry Magazine*. There he narrated his feelings about life and death after being diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer. He recalled a day when his cousin (a Baptist minister) asked him if he had any good feelings about religion. Rorty's answer was negative. Then his son asked if he found philosophy of use in his last moments. The answer, again, was negative. Then Rorty said that in his last moments of life he found deep comfort and consolation only in poetry and recited these lines of Walter Landor's *On His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*: "I have strove with none/ for none was worth my strife/ Nature I loved/ and next to Nature, Art/ I warmed both hands before the fire of life/ It sinks, and I am ready to depart." Rorty adds that "I now wish that I had spent somewhat more of my life with verse" (Rorty, 2007a), but this was not because of the 'truths' of which the poets are aware. "There are no such truths" (Rorty, 2007a). Rather, Rorty believed, it was because he would have "lived more fully" if he could have imbibed more poems (Rorty, 2007a). The idea of 'living more fully,' it seems to me, is the central point of tourist atheism. That is, tourist atheists disregard the truthfulness of any statement and search for comfort for the individual-sovereign. In this way, they see an act at the centre of any religion and following this consciousness they have no problem with

expropriating religious assets for the sake of the well-being of the atheists. *Ipsa facto*, tourist atheism is defined by that concern about the well-being of the *individual*, seeing an *act* at the centre of religion, and an attempt to expropriate the assets of religion for the well-being of the individual. This is, one might think, what Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte did. So, was Comte the forerunner of tourist atheism in 19th century? I will address this question in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

The Revival of the Comtean Dream?

1. Introduction

Many branches of atheism are set against both the institutional form of religion and its theistic content. In our time the most famous representatives of this category of atheists are those whom we have called pilgrim atheists (see part two). *New Atheism*, for example, is mainly known for its strong hostility towards religion in any aspect (specifically the idea of a God), scientism and naturalism. It rejects religion as a whole and argues that scientific truth is a substitute for religious certainty. Everything related not only to God but also to any religious mentality, rituality, symbols and institutions is considered to be old-fashioned, regressive, against 'reason' and in some cases inhumane (Dawkins, 2006a; Harris, 2005; 2008; Hitchens, 2008). But as we have seen in the past two chapters, tourist atheism challenges that hostility and tries to take advantage of religion through its deconstruction. Previously, I dealt with de Botton's project as the public face of tourist atheism (see chapter five). But it appears that there are some similarities between '*atheism 2.0*' and tourist atheism in general, on the one hand, and August Comte's (1798-1857) project on the other hand. In the nineteenth century, the atheist Comte had been attracted to the institution and hierarchy of the

Catholic Church while the idea of God for him was absurd (Comte, 1875; 1876; Pickering, 2009). He wanted to reject the *content* of the religious tenets and keep some aspects of its *form*. de Botton also acknowledged the relevance of Comte's project at the end of his book (de Botton, 2012: p. 309-312). In this chapter, I will examine the relevance of the Comtean project. First, we need to remember that there are deep differences between de Botton and Comte. It is more precise to say that Comte typified the pilgrim atheists while de Botton falls into the category of the tourist atheist. Comte had certain apocalyptic ideas about the end of history. According to him, science gives man the only noteworthy knowledge, and he was also sure that religion in its traditional form does disappear. Neither de Botton nor other tourist atheists share any of these ideas. But the point about 'atheism 2.0' is its theological engagement. The novelty is in the shift of the major strategy from the *rejection* of religious ideas to their *expropriation*. It seems that Comte was a pioneer of the expropriation strategy. Disregarding other differences, I will assess the possibility of attributing that strategy to Comte. The central question here is: is there any revival of the Comtean dream in recent atheism?³⁸ Or, one might ask this question the other way around: was Comte the forerunner of 'atheism 2.0'?

³⁸ Before going through the details about Comte's point of view, two points are necessary to mention. In recent years, after many decades of accusing Comte of insanity or even ignoring him, there has been a movement – still marginal but flourishing – toward a reinterpretation of his ideas in the British and American social sciences (cf. Fuller, 2006; Gane, 2006; Pickering, 2009; Wernick, 2001). However, more interesting phenomena is the recovery of the Comtean discourse among some contemporary thinkers, even without any reference to his works, which shows the relevance of his ideas even today. For example, Comte could entirely agree with this assertion from *The Faith of the Faithless* (2012): "Although we can be free of the limiting externalism of conventional morality, established law, and the metaphysics of traditional religion, it

Briefly, regarding the separation of law from counsel after the Enlightenment, Comte attempted to re-join them once more in response to the 'spiritual crisis' of the secular age. That 'spiritual crisis' was caused by underestimating the role of counsels in human society. Since '*atheism 2.0*' starts from that spiritual crisis, it would be a kind of return to what I would call the Comtean *crisis-consciousness*. The very existence of the spiritual crisis justifies the necessity of that change of strategy from rejection to the expropriation of religion. I will, then, distinguish between the two faces of Comte: Comte the philosopher and Comte the poet. While Comte the philosopher recognised the necessity of changing the strategy, Comte the poet, pragmatically, tried to expropriate Catholicism. I will argue that '*atheism 2.0*' is a return to the crisis-consciousness of Comte the philosopher and the pragmatism of Comte the poet.

First we need to ask what the 'Comtean dream' was. The Comtean strategy of the atheistic occupation of religion was an answer to a spiritual crisis of the modern age. Below I will address the question of the separation of laws from counsels and the subsequent 'spiritual crisis' which was the motivation behind the rise of the Comtean dream.

2. The theological background of the 'spiritual crisis'

The motto of the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment was "no spiritual power should exist in society" (Comte, 1998: pp. 191-2). The

seems that we will never be free of that "sordid necessity of living for others." The latter requires an experience of faith, a faith of the faithless that is an openness to love, love as giving what one does not have and receiving that over which one has no power" (Catchley, 2012: p. 7). That is, we might be able to live without religion (in the limited sense of the term) and even without law but not without that binding love of other human beings. That is very much in the Comtean spirit.

dangerous idea of the necessity of the extinction of spiritual power alerted Auguste Comte and filled him with such foreboding that he dedicated most of his life to theoretical criticising and practical challenging of that motto. His basic thesis, in the last phases of his life around 1844-1857, was the necessity of an atheistic return to religion as a way of assuaging the spiritual crisis of the modern era (Acton, 1974). Thus the nature of the *crisis* for Comte was the prioritisation of law and the extinction of spiritual power following the strict separation of law from counsel during the Enlightenment.

Let us quickly review the origins of that separation. The division between counsel and law is a biblical division in origin. “Premodern times thrived on a dialectic between the two: the law bathed in counsel as in a nourishing environment. Counsel preceded the law that was based upon it, but it also surpassed the law by adding a further stage to it” (Brague, 2007: p. 232). In fact, counsels were there for the perfection of one’s behaviour which was not included in the law. The story of the modern, prioritising law goes back to the Middle Ages and the nominalist movement. Two shifts of doctrines in Christianity in the fourteenth century should be accommodated to have a firmer grasp of the modern conception of law separated from counsel. First, Scotus challenged the Thomistic doctrine of *analogy* according to which the divine attributes are *equivocal*. He alternatively conceived of God’s attributes *univocally*. That is to say, God’s characteristics have the same meaning as those of man. The difference between the creator and the created (man) is in degree not in kind (Funkenstein, 1986: p. 26). The second shift was the

emergence of the idea of the *primacy of the will*. Scotus attributed the unrestricted freedom of will to God. It means that “unforeseeable decisions spring from within” God’s nature (Gilson, 1940: p. 310) and those decisions are unknowable for human beings. Thus, God determines law and in a way law is the decision of God according to the unknowable divine will (see chapters one and two). “The law eventually came to be reduced to the divine will [...]. That conception fits within an overall movement that shifts the centre of gravity of the divine attributes from wisdom toward power” (Brague, 2007: pp. 236-7).

Following those two doctrines of the *univocity of being* and the *reduction of law to the will of God*, the nominalistic version of Christian theology “ensured that men [...], when enjoying unrestricted, unimpeded property rights and even more when exercising the rights of a sovereignty that ‘cannot bind itself’, come closest to the *imago dei*” (Milbank, 2006: p. 16). The modern conception of the law has been grounded in this kind of (borrowing Heidegger’s term) ‘onto-theological’ point of view which sees man as a miniature of God with ‘free will’ at the centre of its being (i.e. *God the player*). In this line of thought the law was reduced to a contract or commandment of the sovereign.

The law, for its part, extricated itself from the counsels that formed a protective gauge around it, now showing forth in its full might as commandment. This was the result of a long-term evolution that had begun within scholasticism. [...] For the moderns, that reduction became an axiom. [...] consequently, everything that might claim to be a law

without presenting itself as a commandment is relegated to the realm of *metaphor*. (Brague, 2007: pp. 233-4—*ital. mine*)

Accordingly, the residue of that process in the modern era was a law with a sovereign backing it. Among the moderns, it seems that Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was the one who “gave this position its most impressive presentation” (Brague, 2007: p. 234). He famously defined law as merely formal. In the next section Kant’s separation of law from counsel and his invitation to wipe out spiritual power will be taken into consideration. This Kantian scheme was objected to by Comte, mainly because Comte considered the Kantian annihilation of ‘spiritual power’ as the cause of the ‘spiritual crisis’ and in reverse he tried to revive the centrality of counsel. Atheism 2.0 also shares this diagnosis. That revival of counsel is at the heart of both the Comtean dream and ‘atheism 2.0’.

3. Kant’s maturity: no spiritual power should exist in society

Kant defended law and a political system as a hard shell (with the support of an authoritative sovereign). For him, people should submit to the sovereign for the sake of ‘maturity,’ and should also reject the guardians and counsels. As such, Kant translated ‘the prioritisation of law’ as ‘the prioritisation of the modern state’ inside which there is no room for ‘spiritual power.’

The historical figure of Fredrick II in Kant’s scheme was the modern sovereign who is at the top of the *hard shell of laws* during the Enlightenment. Kant considered all forms of protest against this

authoritative ruler as illegitimate³⁹. It is noteworthy that, for him, the reign of Fredrick was a mere transitional step toward ‘maturity.’ This transition has been shown in his famous essay *What is Enlightenment?* (1784). Kant believed that his age was not the *enlightened* age but the age of *Enlightenment*. However, “we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position [...] of using their own understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance” (Kant, 1999: p. 58). But it seemed to Kant that there were some clear signs that prove that “the obstacle to universal enlightenment, to man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity, are gradually becoming fewer. In this respect, our age is the age of enlightenment; the century of *Frederick*” (Kant, 1999: p. 58—*Ital.* original). Here, Kant used teleological metaphors to make sense of the wide historical transformations (Collingwood, 1994: pp. 93-6). He believed that there is an ultimate end for our historical movement and that is the ‘*enlightened society*’ with ‘mature’ men who can use their own reason independent of external guardians, either clergymen or monarchs. But he lived in the time of Fredrick II; the time of the *Enlightenment*. Making progress toward that end in history, we are still in the midway.

Accordingly, the *hard shell of law* with a sovereign at the top, in Kant’s political scheme, was just a *form* to protect modern society from

³⁹ Protest and revolution were not permitted in Kant’s scheme because they challenge the *hard shell* and would put us under the threat of a return to the situation of chaos/anarchy and the state of war of all against all which for Kant, as for Hobbes and Locke, was a Damocles Sword above the head. Kant “avoids theories of a right of revolution based on breaches of the social contract by rulers. Since for Kant the ruler’s authority is derived not from consent or a promise to obey but from his being the executor of a public legal justice [...] he is able to say that imperfect legality being better than “anarchy,” subjects must obey even if a ruler violates the idea of the contract” (Riely, 1982: p. 127).

falling into the state of anarchy during the transition (Kant, 1999: p. 31). But the sovereign has no responsibility for the content. We need to recall that Fredrick's motto was "*Argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey!*" (Kant, 1999: P. 59). Kant was, indicatively, optimistic about this motto because he believed in the sublime final outcome of this process. He wrote:

Thus once the germ on which nature has lavished most care – man's inclination and vocation to *think freely* – has developed within this hard shell, it gradually reacts upon the mentality of the people, who thus gradually become increasingly able to *act freely*. (1999: P. 59—*ital.* original)

Behind this call for the trust in one's own understanding, there is an invitation to live according to the 'individual will'. In the period of tutelage we act as a means for the will of the guardians. But there is a possibility and inherent potentiality inside human nature which lets the individual to will *the good*⁴⁰.

To recap the discussion, Kant wanted a political/legal *form* (i.e. the *hard shell*) which is nothing but the instrument which guarantees the realisation of that 'unqualified good' or that good will. The pursuit of the good (the moral) is equal to the pursuit of freedom and for him this was an individual enterprise (Owen, 1994: p. 11). Thus politics is not about *the*

⁴⁰The moral good for Kant is based on the only unqualified good in the world, 'good will', as he famously wrote in his *Groundwork*: "It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a good will" (Kant, 2008: p. 7). Thus, "enlightenment here is represented as *moral autonomy*" (Owen, 1994: p. 10). Man is an end-in-itself because he is the source of *the will* (Riely, 1982: p. 149) and thus the source of *the good*. This conception of autonomy reminds us of the Scotist mentality.

good (in its Platonic sense as an absolute measure of justice); rather, it is about a legal *form* under which the individual pursuit of *the good* becomes possible while this *form* does not guarantee that goal (Reiss, 1999: pp. 25-26). So finally we have a formal law, behind which is a sovereign (i.e. one who sets the rules of the game). We do not need not to challenge that hard shell (i.e. the rules of the game) but it would be necessary to get rid of counsels and guardians inside the shell in order to create enough space for the pursuit of the *moral autonomy*.

There is, then, a double movement here: first, the necessary submission to the authoritarian ruler inside the hard shell of the powerful state, and second, the indispensable and enduring challenge of the spiritual power to open the space and pave the way for the pursuit of one's own *will* which would gradually lead to 'maturity.' The consequence of this double movement is the separation of law from counsel and the challenge of the legitimacy of the power of the guardians of counsels. Maturity for Kant is attainable by this double movement of submission to the sovereign and rejection of the spiritual power. Although Comte agreed with the idea of the *hard shell*, he held that challenging the 'spiritual power' and the authority of those whom Kant called 'guardians' would be treacherous. In the following sections, I will write about the two faces of Comte which coherently matched each other in terms of his character: Comte the philosopher and Comte the poet. While Comte the philosopher grasped the problem of the Kantian Scheme, it was Comte the poet who pragmatically tried to make the change possible.

4. Comte the philosopher: the necessity of the spiritual power

Comte could see the immature parts of the human soul which could not be grasped in the Kantian scheme. Comte the philosopher captured an insight into the emotional side of the human. His conception of the *spiritual crisis* of modern times has been famously formulated in his division of the three fundamental stages of history – theological, metaphysical and positive (Comte, 1903: pp. 1-37; Comte, 1875: pp. 505-510). Accordingly, he believed that our nature includes *intellect* and *heart*. In the theological regime (*regime theologique*) the intellect was vitiated by the heart. The second stage was the Enlightenment, “a transitory, bastard stage” (Voegelin, 1999: p. 244). During the Enlightenment (which Comte used to call the metaphysical stage) the *intellect* needed to become revolutionary in order to emancipate itself from the chain of *heart* (and counsel), which put an end to the impotence of the intellect in the theological regime (Voegelin, 1999: p. 186). Comte believed that the situation at that time, during the nineteenth century, was characterised by the angry and aggressive reason/intellect. One might say that Kant’s ‘*dare to know*’ was the motto of the revenge of the *intellect* against the *heart* during the Enlightenment which caused a kind of disharmony in human life. In other words, both Kant and Comte could see the paradox/crisis side of the Enlightenment. But Kant (whom Comte might have called a metaphysician) believed that modern men, after the ‘emancipation’ from the ‘guardians’ and the ‘leading strings’, would see that “Now this danger is not in fact so very great, for they would certainly learn to walk eventually after a few falls” (Kant, 1999: p. 54). Thus Kant was optimistic about the immature parts of the human soul and the

potentiality of the spontaneous generation of maturity. Thus, it would seem enough for him to liquidate the barriers on the way toward maturity. But Comte was more pessimistic about the self-generation of maturity. That is to say, what Kant called the 'free thinking' inside the hard shell was for Comte 'the most complete mental anarchy' (Comte, 1998: p. 196; Comte, 1877).

Comte, between 1825 and 1826, right after his break-up with Saint-Simon, in an essay called *Considerations on the Spiritual Power* (Comte, 1998: pp. 187-227), tried independently to define the very fundamental 'crisis' and the 'mental anarchy' in the modern age. He reached a formulation about the crisis to which he remained loyal to the end of his life.⁴¹ Comte's basic thesis was that what Kant used to reject as the old 'guardians' of pre-Enlightenment times were the 'spiritual powers' of the theological stage of history. Thus, while Kant was pessimistic about the function of social and religious institutions like the Catholic Church, Comte could see the determining functions of those institutions. Comte, without addressing Kant directly, blamed Enlightenment *philosophes* for the crisis which he saw as the final product of the Kantian invitation to *melt away all the religious solids*. For

⁴¹ As Gane believed, "All his works even his early essays, were composed with the intention of constructing the first adequate explanation of the long 'modern crisis' and of indicating how it might be ended" (Gane, 2006: p.1). Comte himself rejected any sort of discontinuity among stages of his works from this respect. Comte "lashed out at 'some sophists' who had 'denied the continuity' between the *Cours* [*Cours de Philosophie Positive*, 1830-1842] and the *Système* [*Système de politique positive*, 1852-1854]. In order to demonstrate that he had not changed direction, he emphasized that the *Synthèse* [*La Synthèse Subjective*, 1856] was intended to 'continue' the *Système*, his work on politics and morality (or religion), just as the *Système* 'prolonged' his *Cours*, which founded his philosophy and originally established the importance of Humanity. All three works making up his 'great trilogy' were of 'equal grandeur' and made a 'normal progression,' one that realized his opuscles' plan to reconstruct the spiritual power" (Pickering, 2009: p. 489).

Comte, that problematic invitation was arguably based on a major dogma: “that society”, inside the Kantian hard shell, “should not be organized” (Comte, 1998: p. 192). The most important branch of this dogma according to Comte is the rejection of the spiritual power.

Of all the revolutionary prejudices engendered over the last three centuries by the decay of the old social system, the oldest, the most entrenched, the most widespread, and the general foundation of all the others, is the principle by virtue of which no spiritual power should exist in society, or, what amounts to the same thing, the opinion that completely subordinates this power to the temporal power. (Comte, 1998: p. 192)

Long after this early text, Comte, in *System of Positive Polity* (1851-1854), still thought that the ‘obsession with reason’ and forgetfulness of heart was just one of those ambivalent results of the Enlightenment. As he wrote, “The spiritual power of the West in its three social attributes of counsel, consecration, and regulation has more and more fallen into desuetude since the end of the Middle Ages, by virtue of the gradual downfall of the provisional beliefs” (Comte, 1877: p. 8). For Comte this process of ignoring and attacking the spiritual power and its institutions might even have caused the dissolution of society.

While retrograde theologians are alarmed at the thought that nothing short of miracle can prevent the entire dissolution of society, the metaphysicians [*Enlightenment*

philosophes] who advocate progress justify their opponents' alarm by their aspirations, for the practical issue of those aspirations would be the overthrow of all the institutions on which society ultimately rests. (Comte, 1877: p. 10)

Thus, the crisis, for Comte, was that kind of disharmony between intellect and heart or between law and counsel which was the product of the Enlightenment (Comte, 1998: p. 215; Comte, 1877; Gane, 2006: p. 90). The final harmony is attainable only in the positive stage of history. The general formula of this expected harmony goes as follows: "While it is for the heart to suggest our problems, it is for the intellect to solve them" (Comte, 1875: p. 14).

In brief, Kant was afraid of the anarchy resulting from the collapse of the past regime and he prescribed the hard shell of an authoritative state negatively to prevent that kind of anarchy and, positively, he hoped that it would gradually lead us to maturity. Accepting the Kantian idea of a hard shell,⁴² Comte saw many dangers in a society which lacked 'spiritual power' and a society which was 'disorganised' in terms of morality (Comte, 1998: pp. 197-207).

5. 'Atheism 2.0': the heir of the Comtean crisis-consciousness

In this section I will argue that both Alain de Botton and Auguste Comte started their theologically engaged projects as a response to a crisis. As mentioned above, the significance of Comte's scheme does not

⁴² Comte in the last years of his life supported Napoleon III which caused many of his disciples to think that he had betrayed them (cf. Pickering, 2009: p. 478).

come from its historical originality. Thus, we might wonder what is unique about Comte's ideas. Voegelin argued that

Neither Saint-Simon nor Comte has a place in history because of the originality of his ideas or the profoundness of his systematic thought; their ideas were a common possession of the age, and their achievement in systematic penetration is at best dilettantic. They hold their distinguished place because of their keen sensitiveness for the critical character of the epoch, and because of their ability for concentrating the apocalyptic atmosphere into blazing symbols of doom and salvation. (1999: p. 228)

The significance of Comte's ideas, therefore, was in his consciousness about the spiritual crisis.⁴³ The argument here is that the

⁴³In the nineteenth century a generation of thinkers (including Comte, Saint-Simon, de Maistre and, even before them, Voltaire) were not "unconcerned with the intellectual and emotional vacuum left by their rejection of the Christian faith" (cf. Charlton, 1963: p. 24). It was fearsome for them to abandon religion because of the imminent but unintended consequences of the disappearance of the moral unity of the society. Unlike the Enlightenment *deists*, like Voltaire, the attack of the next generations of the heirs of the Enlightenment did not remain limited to the Church. It targeted the very existence of the *Supreme Being*, whatever that is. The spread of this disbelief even magnified the sense of crisis for the thinkers of the time (Voegelin, 1999: p. 186). We can see this fear clearly in Voltaire's epistle to an unknown writer of a controversial atheistic treatise called *The Three Impostors* (*De Tribus Impostoribus*). The book targeted the theistic core belief of the three Abrahamic religions. In response Voltaire defended the idea (or even the illusion) of a God. Voltaire wrote: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him" for the sake of the functions of the mere 'illusive' existence of this 'imaginary' entity in the people's mind: "Whom the sage proclaims, and whom kings adore" (McGrath, 2004: p. 25). The historical narrative of the spiritual crisis at the end of the eighteenth century was, more or less, similar. First, Europe had been united under the umbrella of Catholicism, i.e. a moral unity. Second, by the time of the emergence of the Reformation this unity had collapsed. Third, the Enlightenment had challenged the residual religious beliefs through negative philosophies (Comte, 1875: p. 10; Gane, 2006: pp. 2 and 80). Finally, the French revolution "had marked the end of a religious as well as of a political regime". But while "The critiques of the eighteenth century had ruined the prestige of Catholicism and monarchy," they "were too near to see how much was left standing of the old civilisation in spite of the general destruction. They believed that nothing survived, that the future had to be made anew, and enthusiasts in great numbers felt the call to preach the moral and political gospel for the new age" (Voegelin, 1999: p. 168).

crisis for Comte and de Botton is the same in nature – a spiritual crisis caused by the large improvement of the revolutionary and aggressive reason which resulted in the marginalisation of emotion, heart and counsel in the secular age. That is, both could see the forgotten, ‘immature’ parts of human soul. And both started from a kind of *crisis-consciousness*. de Botton, in reviewing Comte’s pathology of the atheistic life, approvingly wrote:

He [Comte] believed that capitalism had aggravated people’s competitive, individualistic impulses and distanced them from their communities, their traditions and their sympathies with nature. He criticized the nascent mass media for coarsening sensibilities and closing off chances for self-reflection, seclusion and original thought. (2012: p. 303)

Atheistic life would, as de Botton says, result in some calamities: “A secular society devoted solely to the accumulation of wealth, scientific discovery, popular entertainment and romantic love [...] would fall prey to untenable social maladies” (de Botton, 2012: p. 300). These are also what Comte categorised as the outcomes of *egoism*. de Botton’s basic argument is that good ideas will never change our everyday life unless they are supported by “institutions of a kind that only religions have so far known how to build” (de Botton: 2012, p. 307). So, the strategy of the

On the one hand Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), pursued restoration of the old as the only way out of the crisis. On the other hand, Auguste Comte and Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) chose a secular version of religion as a *soft shell* inside that Kantian *hard shell* represented by the powerful state (Acton, 1974; Charlton, 1963: p. 24-37).

rejection of religion as a whole has failed and caused these calamities. In other words, both Comte and de Botton start their projects from this failure or crisis. The solution would lie in a new poetic vision and prophetic mission of fabricating new secularised religions (in the case of Comte) or deconstructing religious ideas to take advantage of them (in the case of de Botton). The underlying strategy of both is an atheistic expropriation of religions.

6. A return to Comte the poet

In this last section the poetic vision of Comte and de Botton will be addressed through answering two questions: what do we mean by the poetic vision? How have Comte and de Botton, respectively, tried to make the real changes possible?

Poetic vision, for Comte, is the prerequisite for any fundamental change (Voegelin, 1999: p.247), and imagination, which is the origin of poetry, has a creative power. More substantively, the creative power of poetry challenges the mere representational function of poems. Poetry here loses its innocence. It is not about the mere representation of personal emotions, but is a tool at the hands of a political reformer to fabricate a myth and to explore new horizons. One can conclude that poetry is a way to explore new horizons by the occupation of the existing ones. From this point of view, Kant's myth of 'maturity' was the result of a certain poetic point of view which was contrarily the function of his imagination. The outcome of that poetic revolution was the suppression of human spiritual needs. The Comtean mission was to revive that

imagination to rejuvenate humanity after the eclipse of love during the resurrection of the Enlightenment version of aggressive reason.

How did Comte establish his poetic vision? The mission of expropriation and occupation of religious ideas was at the centre of Comte's poetic vision in the last years of his life⁴⁴ when he started to sign his letters as the First Great Priest of Humanity (Pickering, 2009: p. 525). He tried to revive that moral unity of society by establishing a secularised Religion of Humanity. The secularised religion was a necessary step toward giving birth to the harmonious society in the last stage of history which he grasped in his philosophical works. He returned to Catholicism because of its high-level organisation, hierarchy and discipline to resist the 'undisciplinable souls' of modern men (Pickering, 2009: pp. 521-2).

Comte makes abundantly clear in this opening section of the *Système [System of Positive Polity (1851-1854)]*, society is not yet in the normal state, and will not be there until the

⁴⁴ There is a difference between my interpretation of Comte's last years and some other sociological conceptions. My suggestion is that we need to ignore the unproductive division between Comte the sane philosopher versus Comte the 'insane' prophet and replace it with the division between Comte the philosopher versus Comte the poet. The myth of Comte's insanity and melancholy, because of his invitation to the secularised religion, first originated in a treatise by John Stuart Mill, which was published in the *Westminster Review* under the title *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865). In that treatise, Mill started with a fair examination of Comte's positive philosophy and ended by pitying his melancholy: "Others may laugh, but we could far rather weep at this melancholy decadence of a great intellect" (Mill, 1866: p. 199). The myth has been repeated by many sociology textbook writers until recently. Even Norbert Elias in *What Is Sociology?* (1978) stated: "he [Comte] was very likely a little mad" (Elias, 1978: p. 33). But here, I consider Comte over his whole life (except in the period of his psychological breakdown 1826-1827) as totally sane and rational, first because there were no signs of insanity in his later years (Gane, 2006: p. 14; Voegelin, 1999: pp. 163-168), and second because we can trace back the seeds of his prophetic mission to his early writings (Gane, 2006: p. 40; Voegelin, 1999: pp. 234-245). For example, in his *Course de Philosophie Positive* (1975), while he was referring to the military organisations, he never separated counsels from commands (Gane, 2006: p. 75). In fact, the seeds of the necessity of rejoining counsels and commands were in his earlier courses. Finally, this kind of prophetic mission was completely normal among his contemporaries – thinkers like de Maistre and Saint-Simon (Charlton, 1963: pp. 43-44).

positive, the new religion, is in place. To define that polity in anticipation of its being put into practice is the objective of the *Système*. (Dale, 1989: p 37)

Arguably, Comte's conception of religion and its role in society is significant in understanding his poetic vision. Religion for Comte was more about the non-sacred bind of society (Comte, 1875: p. 10). To keep alive this binding power one does not necessarily need to adhere to the idea of a transcendental being. Comte as a poet/prophet was about to keep that binding/attaching function of religion at work in the 'disenchanted' world⁴⁵. Comte used to see his own time the time of crisis (or a transitional level in history). His Religion of Humanity was an attempt to overcome that crisis which was the result of challenging the 'spiritual power' by Kant. As explained above, the spiritual crisis was a crisis following the intentional blindness toward the immature parts of the human soul. For 'Comte the poet', then, human imagination should create a unifying umbrella of religious-like spiritual power.

But how does de Botton use poetry to occupy religion? de Botton also believes in the necessity of the change of the strategy from rejection to expropriation, and holds that the human imagination has a pivotal role in the process of fabrication of the new solids.⁴⁶ But while Comte is so

⁴⁵ "In place of the idea that society becomes less religious as it moves into the positive epoch, Comte suggests that it becomes even more religious – religion is redefined as '*religare*', rebinding, rather than as a system of worship and ethics oriented towards a transcendental sacred order" (Gane, 2006: p. 121). However, the full emergence of a secular religion as an ideal 'rebinding force' has been considered to be a gradual process.

⁴⁶ For example, the genius point that Christianity grasped was that the soul is like a child inside us which needs to be educated. de Botton observed that in the Christian frescoes of the Middle Ages, the soul was portrayed as a child inside the human body (de Botton, 2012: pp. 112-121). The child enters the human body at the time of birth through the

elitist in his usage of the imagination, de Botton sees it as a collective 'wiki-project' (de Botton, 2011). While Comte's target audiences were emperors and rulers of Europe, feudal society and bankers, de Botton does not concern himself with an organised spiritual power as a solution. He supports more individualistic and psychological solutions. The self-

mouth and is dragged out by an angel or Satan after death while it is still a child. The inner child remains a child because some parts of our soul, for Christians, remain eternally immature. de Botton sees this underlying thesis of the Christian doctrine as still true in the secular age (de Botton, 2012: pp. 115). He mentions that modern atheists disagree with Christians about the needs of human soul, still "it is hard to discredit the provocative underlying thesis, which seems no less relevant in the secular realm than in the religious one – that we have within us a precious, childlike, vulnerable core which we should nourish and nurture on its turbulent journey through life" (de Botton, 2012: p. 115). de Botton and Comte, following Christians, developed their conception of human nature, in which there is an eternal desire for the maternal safety and the support of the guardian. Comte, after the tragic death of his mistress, Clotilde de Vaux (1815-1846), established the cult of Clotilde and, from her, Comte extended his prayers to Humanity as a whole (Pickering, 2009: p. 314 and 337). To answer the question of necessary maternal safety, de Botton showed the mechanisms of dealing with the immature parts of the soul in religions. For example, Christianity presupposes that immaturity for the audience then manages the counterpart simplicity in its messages. Furthermore, the Christian educational system, unlike its secular academic counterpart, focused on repeating that message regularly in speeches and Sunday ceremonies (de Botton, 2012: p. 135). While Comte called himself the pope of secular religion, de Botton suggested psychotherapy for dealing with the soul-related support of the modern man (de Botton, 2013b). For de Botton, Dawkins' version of atheism (in which the Christian longing of comfort through the figure of *Madonna and child* is radically ridiculed) seems right in theory but not productive in practice. de Botton believes that the question about the historical validity of the existence of Mary and her story is not the right question. "The apposite point is not whether the Virgin exists, but what it tells us about human nature that so many Christians over two millennia have felt the need to invent her. Our focus should be on what the Virgin Mary reveals about our emotional requirement – and, in particular, on what becomes of these demands when we lose our faith" (de Botton, 2012: p. 168). The Virgin embodies the missed and lost supporter of the mature people. "While for long stretches of our lives we can believe in our maturity," de Botton writes, "we never succeed in insulating ourselves against the kind of catastrophic events that sweep away our ability to reason, our courage and our resourcefulness at putting dramas in perspective and throw us back into a state of primordial helplessness" (de Botton, 2012: pp. 169-171). At the time of psychological crisis, our real supporter is either not accessible or our dignity does not let us to refer to him/her. But religion, according to de Botton, as our invention, fabricated the solid figures of the imaginary 'sympathetic adults' — figures such as "Mary in Christianity, Isis in Ancient Egypt, Demeter in Greece, Venus in Rome and Guan Yin in China" (de Botton, 2012: p. 171). Those figures function as spiritual supporters when no adult feels embarrassed to refer to them at times of crisis. de Botton praises religions for what he calls the 'fabrication' of these sound and solid supporters, and believes as such that human beings need these solid moments. The underlying thesis of his *Religion for Atheists* (2012) is that the secular world should not be ignorant toward these thousand-year-old solids just because of the rejection of the core message of religion and the belief in God. But the atheists should use the buffet of religions and choose their plausible solids to rest on them against the calamities and sufferings of modern life.

help book is also a suitable medium for that reason. de Botton's project, as well as his age, is quite different from Comte's.

Religion, for him, is no more than a 'buffet' open to us (de Botton, 2012: chapter 5). Therefore, Atheism 2.0 is not a mere 'return' to religion. It would be more precise to say that it is the 'reverse engineering' of religion. That is to say, we can choose any combination of religious items that fits us. de Botton defends the process of the selection of ideas, manners, rituals and beliefs to be operative and he targets not only Catholicism but also Buddhism and Judaism. 'Atheism 2.0' for de Botton, then, is first of all not a centralised enterprise and does not need any pope; rather, it is a collective project (de Botton, 2011). Second, 'atheism 2.0' is a *method* – a method of taking advantage of religions. Thus, no specific goal or option has been prescribed for these new atheists – as science and reason are the only legitimate options for the *New Atheists*. The revolutionary element of 'atheism 2.0' is that it, with the mediation of Comtean ideas, opens this buffet for atheists and in this way gives birth to tourist atheism.

7. Conclusion

The spiritual crisis of the secular age started with the rejection of the necessity of the spiritual power in society in any form. Kant's treatise, *What is Enlightenment?*, was the manifesto of this rejection. In that treatise he separated law from counsel and their counterpart institutions, the state and the church. In addition, Kant's idea was that modern men will become mature by getting rid of the latter. But Comte from the

beginning of his career, as a thinker, was concerned about this rejection of religion and in many texts addressed it as a *crisis*. During the final decade of his life he found the solution in the constitution of a secularised religion. I distinguished between Comte the philosopher and Comte the poet which, I suggest, prefigures the division between pilgrim and tourist atheisms. Comte the poet tried to open new horizons by using imagination to fabricate a new secular religion. That fabrication, in his mind, would pave the way for harmony between mind and heart. 'Atheism 2.0' is a return to the crisis-consciousness of Comte the philosopher, and it revived the basic theme of the Comtean poetic vision which is an atheistic return to religion to occupy it. In the first chapter, I wrote about Comte's calendar and his odd exclusion of Jesus from it. Now I should add that when for the first time Comte heard about Percy Shelley, he did not hesitate to add him to his calendar. The priority of Shelley over Jesus in the Comtean scheme is symbolic of the way he used to approach religion. The basic insight of this chapter was that de Botton, starting from that Comtean crisis consciousness, also shared this poetic view of religion with Comte.

Part Three

Beyond Prometheanism

The term post-secularism refers to series of possibilities for modern forms of knowledge which refrain from accepting secularism as a meta-discourse. In chapter eight, I will argue that the environmental crisis is the result of the poor use of science and technology. And theology which made modern science and technology possible can contribute in solving taming the beast of the modern crises. In that chapter, I will also argue that Prometheanism has never been an appropriate background ideology for science. In chapter nine, I will put Sloterdijk's idea of giving priority to the Nietzschean concept of perfection against the Rorty's thesis of *the priority of democracy to philosophy*. With the help of that comparison, I will argue for a thesis inspired by Sloterdijk's philosophy which will be called *the primacy of training over truth*. I will argue that unlike Rorty's scheme, 'the primacy of training' is not based on the outright exclusion and privatisation of religion. The difference between these two theses is that the latter sees democracy founded on (not a mere static trade of truth with freedom) but a dynamic educational, co-working and co-training process through all the religious and irreligious exercises. The last chapter of the thesis considers the significance of the idea of public sociology for co-practice in a post-secular age. The major

insight of the chapter is that there are two theses originally put forward by Michael Burawoy but still need to be highlighted; those are the necessity of challenging the assumed neutrality of social sciences and also the necessity of public engagement in the form of encouraging co-practice in society. I will suggest that an idea of a much needed post-secular public sociology is the result of such reading of Burawoy's thesis.

Chapter Eight

Taming the Beast: Prometheanism and the future of natural sciences

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the relationship between modern atheisms and the 'question of science'. By the 'question of science' I mean a question about an explanatory theoretical framework to understand the history of science and also adopt a suitable science policy. I divide this question into two parts about which I will write here. The first is about the history of science: what kind of system of belief made science possible? Was that theology or some sort of atheism? The second concerns the future of science: what kind of background ideology is suitable for protecting the benefits of science while still enabling us to cope with the great disasters caused by science and technology?

These questions seem necessary to be addressed in society, the distinguishing feature of which is *risk*. Ulrich Beck (born 1944), in his *Risk Society* (1986), establishes a division between the old meaning of accident as the outcome of human miscalculations and the new meaning of the term, which shows itself most conspicuously in nuclear power plants. The consequences of any sort of accident in the new meaning of

the term (such as in the case of Chernobyl disaster) last for a long time, often more than a generation. That means the consequences of the accidents in our time will affect many people who will be born years later and who will probably be a long way from the place of the accident. Beck concludes that “[t]his means that the calculation of risk as it has been established so far by science and legal institutions *collapses*” (Beck, 2002: p. 22—*ital.* original). Hence, we need a new policy to take that risk into account. The ‘beast of science’ – which was known to the romantics of the nineteenth century such as Mary Shelley (1797-1851) the writer of *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* (1823) – has been released and caused destruction and has instilled fear in people. No individual or even single state alone is able to control the consequences of the actions of this beast. Take the case of climate change which is the ultimate result of the industrialisation process and greenhouse gas emissions through the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas). The UN, at least after 2002, continuously tried to find an international consensus for controlling the environmental crisis and warned that no single country will remain unharmed following this disaster. In another case, fracking or *Hydraulic Fracturing* is a method designed to recover gas from the shale-rock through drilling down into earth and injecting a mixture of water, sand and chemicals into the earth. This technique causes a lot of concern because of the possibility of contaminating the groundwater or even causing earthquakes. A writer has described it as “the tornado on the horizon that is poised to wreck on-going efforts to create green economies, local agriculture [and] investments in renewable energy” (Steingraber, 2011: p.

350). Long before this, in the 1990s, many theoreticians talked about ‘the end of nature’, which means that after the greenhouse effect, acid rain and the depletion of the ozone layer no one can talk about ‘the natural’ since everything in the world is manipulated and even ruined by human beings (see: McKibben, 2000). Thus, the question of the disasters caused by science and technology is no longer a cause of concern for the distant future (as Mary Shelley used to think); rather, it is one of the central problems of our age. The main question of this chapter is about a way to tame the beast of science and the capability of atheist ideologies to undertake such a task. Let us start from the top. The first question is historical: who made this beast?

2. Who made the beast?

The beast of science is essentially the result of the ‘heretical’ readings of some Christian theological narrations that presuppose the ontological existence of natural laws and assume the epistemological possibility of fathoming those laws by men with god-like powers – which means by the will to control nature. Steve Fuller coined the term *theomimesis* for the theological process of the transition of God’s powers to man (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: chapter 2).

Theomimesis, which in Greek means God-playing, is humankind’s attempt to see the world from God’s point of view, the ultimate objective view or the view from nowhere. As is evident in the term, theomimesis is about an act of mimicry. That is, man tries to reproduce God’s knowledge and power through science. As I discussed in the first two chapters, this

became possible in the Christian context because of the presence of a figure like Christ. The very being of Christ shows that humankind's existence overlaps with that of God's, because Jesus was neither wholly man nor wholly God. In fact, theomimesis refers to the moment that is described in several books of the Bible (Matthew, Mark and Luke) that Jesus and his apostles on the top of a mountain understand that Jesus is son of God (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: p. 47). Thus, the God of Christianity can give what He has (e.g. his knowledge) to man as a gift. This is the way to overcome the Original Sin which is related to Adam's and Eve's eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, and exactly because of that act of overcoming, Jesus has been called the second Adam. Accordingly, a follower of Christ can overcome his or her sinful nature by making paradise on earth and this is mainly through science. I tend to see this Christian onto-theological premise as the cornerstone of the modern scientific viewpoint which was the privilege of the Western countries. One can easily see that in the other parts of the world, from China to Persia and Egypt, there were highly advanced civilisations which regardless of their achievements could never even think of this level of manipulation in nature. The difference between the West and the rest does not stem from a special talent or the level of sophistication of the thought which the Westerners possess; rather, it emanates from those theological narratives that allowed the mimicking of God and which did not exist in non-Western civilisations. Deirdre McCloskey in *Bourgeois Dignity* (2011) argues that economics cannot explain the emergence of modernity in general and especially in modern

sciences. That is to say, the growth of science in Europe was not the result of the pressures of external factors such as market forces. Quite contrarily, the internal factors played more significant roles. McCloskey argues that this internal factor was the innovation of the practitioners who were trying to solve technical problems and complete experiments. Moreover, there was a society which “honour[ed] and liberate[d]” those practitioners. That type of practitioner, McCloskey believes, was the bourgeoisie of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, specifically in England (McCloskey, 2011: 326-7). Thus, innovation in terms of finding new ways of solving the practical problems was the result of the constitution of science and this is what can be found in the European bourgeoisie. Yet McCloskey fails to answer one question: where does that innovation come from? Why cannot this factor be found in other civilisations? As illustrated, theomimesis is the best answer to this question. This argument can also be used against the pilgrim atheists’ misreading of the history of science. They have always denied the theological foundations of the scientific viewpoint. But what is the real contribution of atheists themselves to the scientific discoveries? Fuller and Lipinska believe that:

‘Atheism’ has only ever contributed to the advancement of science and the empowerment of humanity when humans have arrogated for themselves divine powers, while refusing to credit God for the inspiration; in this respect, such self-avowed ‘atheist’ movements as idealism, positivism, Marxism, etc. are properly called ‘Promethean’ [...]. And it is

just these *crypto-theistic* atheists who need to figure out which game they are playing when they are 'playing God'.
(2014: p. 56—*ital.* mine)

Although Dawkins and Dennett believe that atheism is the 'logical' result of the scientific viewpoint, the truth is that science became possible only within a certain onto-theological framework which let us mimic God. Modern Prometheanism was not the end-point of that mimicry. Contrarily, Prometheanism is about the sublimation of that instinct of mimicry – the moment when modern man intentionally decided not to see that he or she was mimicking God, and thus through this denial he or she became God. The very reason for choosing Prometheus as the metaphor was to evoke the story in which hope and fire are endowed on man. Fire stands for civilisation while hope is the symbol of progress. Zeus did not want man to have fire, but Prometheus, who loved human beings, stole fire from gods and gave it to man and successively paid a heavy price for disobeying. Prometheus, more or less similar to the Christian definition of Satan, was a disobeying angel. Both severed man's relationship with God. The same is true for pilgrim atheists, who see modern civilisation in contrast with the religious form of life. They also tend to deny the theological roots of modernity. Akin to the story of Prometheus, pilgrim atheism is about a radical break with the theological past and defining humanity against God not in continuation of Him, as if 'the stolen fire' authentically belonged to man or was the natural product of human history.

Let us articulate *theomimesis* in another way to answer the pilgrim atheists' cynicism towards the theological relevance of science. We know that *risk* is the motor-engine of modern science. Without taking enormous risks, scientists could never have achieved this level of technological advancement. In fact, technological advancement becomes possible by moving from the uncertain, which is the *unknown unknown*, to risk, or *known unknown*. When scientists dare to take risks in their own research, there are still unknown elements at work and huge uncertainty about the very possibilities and also the consequences of the given scientific inquiry. An example from the history of science will vindicate this claim. The Green Revolution was one of the most ambitious scientific-political projects of the 1960s. The idea was to get rid of starvation in the poorest parts of the world with the help of genetic engineering. Genetic modification is principally what many farmers have done for hundreds of years by selective breeding for special purposes, but the new improvement was biotechnology which let us manipulate the genes from the inside. Subsequently, a scientific miracle happened. In 1980, India became self-sufficient in wheat and rice and in several other countries the result was in favour of the poor. Nevertheless, the side-effects were also huge. For example, the survival of the genetically modified crops caused other local species to die out or in some cases the vast usage of the chemicals led to resistant weeds. "In Europe, although not in the USA, genetically modified (GM) products were denounced as 'Frankenfoods'" (Fara, 2009: p. 360).

The idea of making these Frankenfoods in itself is highly risky, but combined with the very goal of the scientific retiring of the concept of starvation, it creates an objective which is beyond the aspiration of a human being who is merely another type of animal. This ambitious aspiration needs an animal which blurs the borders of its material existence with God. Thus, historically speaking, the theological narratives that let modern man mimic God were responsible for making such an ambitious beast. Those narratives were based on this presupposition that we can 'get into the mind of God', not only that we can play God, because we possess a divine potential. Thus, taking risks and pushing the boundaries of existing knowledge are our distinctive features as human beings. That is to say, there are no borders for God. Yet the historical relevance of theology does not imply that it is still theoretically relevant. Knowing the historical interdependence between science and theology, we still need to argue for the theoretical relevance of theology to the current state or the future of science. Regarding this issue, I will argue that whatever made the beast of science can also tame it – i.e. theology.

3. Who can tame the beast?

Max Weber (1864-1920) in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) suggested that the malaise of the Western modern form of life is *shallowness* (Weber, 2001: pp. 18-32). This shallowness is related to the fact that in modern life the economic acquisition became an end in itself. Thus, it led us to restless activity without any meaning. It is as if man exists for the sake of business not vice-versa (Weber, 2001: p. 32). He famously found the theological roots of this capitalistic ethos in

the theological concept of work-in-calling (*beruf*) which is central in the Calvinist doctrine of *proof*.⁴⁷ In that doctrine intense, regular and systematic labour has been considered as proof of the salvation of the businessman in his or her afterlife (Weber, 2001: pp. 70-100). That religious narrative, Weber believed, has died out. It does not exist any longer. What really exists is the iron cage of capitalism with its “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (Weber, 2001, p. 124) and they are at the service of the capitalists. What has remained from that religious passion, in the end, is only capitalistic greed. One can assume that the same destiny applies to science as a form of knowledge expanded under the capitalist system. Science might have started with the mimicry of God’s knowledge, but ended up in mere greed. While capitalism for Weber was more about economic greed, today, science is about greed for power and endless appetite for the manipulation of nature. Along these lines, the question is who can tame this beast? Which theoretical framework is more capable of saving the world from the disasters caused by science, but, at the same time, retaining its undeniable benefits? Imagine a rhombus on each corner of which are (1) humanism, (2) posthumanism, (3) traditionalism, and (4) transhumanism. Can we find a method for taming the beast of scientific greed in any of these schools? I will suggest that those schools that prescribe a return to the lost theological foundations of capitalism and the capitalistic forms of

⁴⁷ Weber also recognised the importance of Duns Scotus and nominalism for the emergence of capitalism, and hinted that the doctrine of the primacy of the will is common between Calvinism and its Scotist roots. He mentioned it in a footnote to his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (see: Weber, 2001: pp. 195-6).

knowledge are the ones that can tame the beast (which they have created in the first place).

3-1. Humanists

Both types of atheists (pilgrims and tourists) are members of this category. Let us start with pilgrim atheism (I will write about tourist atheists' ideas about science in the next section). The problem with pilgrim atheists, especially Neo-Darwinists, is that they describe humanity as another type of animal among other species. Thus, their conception of humanity is a very 'path-dependent' conception. They consider us parts of the nature. *Ipso facto*, we might be able to control this nature through science but at the end of the day we are in the same process of evolution. Therefore, we might become extinct in the same way that other species have (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: pp. 2-3; Fuller, 2006: chapter 11). The essential difference between humanity and the rest of nature is in the language and the reasoning ability, neither of which guarantees any special superiority over the power of nature. We, our bodies, our cultures, distinct languages and all of our entity are destined to extinction at some point in the (probably distant) future (cf. Dennett, 1995: pp. 511-515). Such a conception of humanity as part of nature cannot be the background ideology which supports science. As I mentioned above, science is about the huge manipulation of nature which needs not to presuppose any inherent sanctity for flora and fauna. If we imagine that evolution is the only valid universal method which determines our destiny, we will not have enough motivation to control this process. This seems to be a legitimate conclusion if we look at the history of the *Homo sapiens*

which, compared to the history of the earth, is a recent phenomenon with several thousand years' precedence. We can, *ipso facto*, draw a spectrum on the one side of which is God and on the other side of which is ape. For humanists, the position of humanity on this spectrum is somewhere around the ape. Humanists do consider humans different from animals in terms of rationality and reasoning capabilities but that ability in itself is not enough for taking part in scientific adventures.

3-2. Posthumanists

Posthumanists also share this idea with humanists that a human being is more similar to an ape than to God, but they tend to see that the cognitive ability of *Homo sapiens* does not mean that human beings have a privileged ontological position in comparison with other animals (Wolfe, 2010). In other words, posthumanism is about recalling the animal side of humanity which was suppressed during the Enlightenment. Posthumanists are critical of the humanistic rationalism which has led us to this dangerous environmental situation. Rationalism, for them, is also responsible for the disregard of animal rights. This kind of naturalisation of human beings, for the same reasons that apply to Neo-Darwinists, cannot work as the background ideology of science which enables us to tame the beast of the disastrous side-effects of science and at the same time does not ruin its achievements. This is because posthumanism does not theoretically support risk-taking as the pivotal concept in scientific research. They alternatively support the precautionary principle in science policy which is about minimising risk for the sake of keeping the harmony of nature.

3-3. Traditionalists

Traditionalism is a philosophical school which is based on comparative religious studies. The fundamental methodological premise of the traditionalists, who are mostly Islamic, Christian or Jewish philosophers, is that the religious truth is common between world leading religions, and therefore the search for this perennial truth should be the common ground of dialogue between world religions. For the same reason this school has also been called *perennialism* (see: Nasr, 1989). Such perennial common truth, for traditionalists, is set against modern secularism and, evidently, science. Subsequently, they see modern secular science as responsible for the recent unprecedented destruction of nature and other fears of the modern world. Hossein Nasr, the leading traditionalist philosopher, in his *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996), goes further and searches for the roots of the scientific destruction of nature in the modern philosophies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He correctly found the roots of the modern destruction of nature in the modern conceptions of man as the torturer of nature – Francis Bacon’s term. Contrary to this modern point of view, Nasr’s goal is to rediscover and revive the traditional sacred science which used to keep the harmony between earth, human beings and heaven (Nasr, 1996: p. 153). That sacred science was based on tradition but this term does not – as may seem *prima facie* – mean something perfect in the past. Tradition “means truths or principles of a divine origin revealed or unveiled to mankind and, in fact, a whole cosmic sector through various figures envisaged as messengers, prophets, avataras, [or] the Logos”

(Nasr, 1989: p. 64). Therefore, if tradition is about the perennial truths that have been revealed, then they are equally valid in the past, present and/or future. I mean, tradition refers to the truths which are considered to be eternal, and therefore time is irrelevant in this discussion; we can always revive those truths, a traditionalist would argue. Exactly because of this accessibility of those truths, we can become God-like (*mute'alleh* in Arabic). In other words, for traditionalists we are more like God than apes. But how can we, God-like creatures, revive that sacred science and more importantly, in terms of our current situation, how can we tame the beast of modern science? It does not seem that the traditionalists have clear answers to those questions.

It would be helpful to compare the traditionalists' intellectual position on modernity (i.e. their absolute rejection of it) with that of the followers of *Radical Orthodoxy*. For example, John Milbank is also a Christian philosopher who believes in the revival of Christian wisdom to cope with the malaise of the modern world. He defines *Radical Orthodoxy* not as an anti-modern movement but as a movement to go beyond modernity (Milbank, 2000: p. 44). No wonder that he, well known as a postmodern theologian, described his tendency toward postmodernism in this way: "back in the 1980s, I certainly saw postmodernism as a moment of opportunity for theology, because it seemed to qualify and diminish secular claims to truth" (Milbank, 2000: pp. 41-2). Seeing postmodernism as a moment of challenging the secular and paving the way for the theological is a policy that might or might not work, but it is certainly an intellectual policy which does not exist in isolation in academia and the

existing situation. Accordingly, Milbank clearly describes the goal of this project as opposing modernity, not through the search for the 'perfect pre-modern' but through seeking "an alternative version of modernity" (Milbank, 2000: p. 45). This political side of *Radical Orthodoxy*, I argue, is its advantage over *traditionalism*. But still we cannot see the Radical Orthodoxy's policy toward secular science and its consequences. How do they want to deal with the environmental crisis? It seems to me that we can guess that both traditionalism and Radical Orthodoxy are more greatly inclined toward the precautionary principle of posthumanists. They have followed the policy of blaming science for all these disasters which is correct but not sufficient.

3-4. Transhumanists

Transhumanists, unlike Neo-Darwinists, believe that human beings are on the God side of the spectrum of being. This idea has been elaborated further in the works of the second generation of transhumanists⁴⁸, Steve Fuller and Veronica Lipinska (2014). If traditionalists are anti-modernity, and if posthumanists are critical of the Enlightenment, transhumanists are pro-modernity and pro-Enlightenment. It might even be more precise to say that they are ultra-moderns. They believe that moderns have not manipulated and controlled nature enough, an outlandish claim that seems more understandable if we look at their definition of humanity. Fuller in his *Humanity 2.0* (2011) reviewed the traits that used to be considered unique to humans, such as culture,

⁴⁸ The first generation of transhumanists contains figures such as Julian Huxley (1887-1975) and Max More (born 1964). The difference between the two generations is in the consistent ideological background belief that the first generation lacked and the second generation prepared for transhumanism.

emotion, personality and morality. He asserted that scientists recently found out that there are some animals that have all or some of these traits (Fuller, 2011: p. 102). So, these are not the proper attributes with which we can define humanity; rather, humankind's power for controlling and altering nature is the distinctive feature of human beings. Moreover, today this feature is more vivid in modern converging technologies, "that is, the integration of cutting edge research in nano-, bio-, info- and cognosciences for purposes of extending the power and control of human beings over their own bodies and their environments" (Fuller, 2011: p. 103). These technologies give us God-like power but it is important to realise that for them the 'God-like' adjective is not only a metaphor. The novel contribution of the second generation of transhumanists is their attempt to prepare that school with a more solid theologically motivated background belief. As a result, they have achieved three main tasks: first, they have rejected the pilgrim atheists' misreading of modern history as the history of warfare between religion and science; second, they have found the roots of modern science in the fourteenth century nominalist movement (see chapters one and two); and finally, they have theologically redefined the proactionary principle, which was first suggested, against posthumanism's precautionary principle, by the pioneering transhumanist Max More. Fuller and Lipinska believe that "embracing risk" is the "constitutive of what it means to be human" (2014: p. 3). This principle, for them, is rooted in the Scotist theological interpretation of the relationship between man and God. In that sense, transhumanism would be about the indefinite expansion of those qualities

that separates us from animals even to the point that we replace our carbon-based body with a silicon-based body which is more durable (Fuller, 2011: p. 3; Kurzweil, 2008).

Before going further in this discussion, I need to conclude this section by returning to the first question I asked: who can tame the beast of science? Based on the points expatiated so far, it is safe to conclude that posthumanism, because of its tempering humanity toward 'mother nature,' and traditionalism, because of its evident rejection of modern forms of knowledge, are ideologically disposed to *kill* the beast of science – not tame it. The pilgrim atheism of Neo-Darwinists also fails to support science because of its inherited determinism that presupposes the indispensable extinction of human beings – just like other species – as the consequence of evolution. This intellectual position is against the spirit of risk-taking as the main motivation behind any scientific and technological progress. What remains in the end are tourist atheism and transhumanism, which are more open to the new modes of interpreting the theological past. Below, I will compare these two movements regarding their policies toward science.

4. Theomimesis versus Theokenosis

The second generation of transhumanists by the theological reading of the *proactionary* principle, more than trying to invent a theoretical basis for this school, are attempting to retrieve the consciousness about the theological elements which are already at work in science. Fuller's neologism for that existing theological potential in

science is *theomimesis*, about which I wrote above. His suggestion is that if we take that theological background seriously, the proactionary imperative would be the future alternative to the precautionary imperative in science policy. In other words, it has been mentioned that according to some Christian doctrines, we are created in the image and likeness of God, and thus we can gain God-like power. Science was the result of this conception of man. Although scientists may create some evil (without any bad intentions) as a result of gaining those powers, we still need to find the solution to those evils in science itself, and not in counter-science. Thus, the question of science policy, like any other policy question, is about a mere value judgement. Do we need to search for the solution to human-made disasters inside science or out of it? On the one hand, the supporters of the precautionary principle (post-humanists and traditionalists) say that we need to search for the answer outside science or by stopping 'doing' science. On the other hand, the advocates of the proactionary principle believe that we need to find the solution to the side-effects of science in science itself – manipulate nature further to save nature (see: Fuller and Lipinska, 2014; Fuller, 2011). Hence, theology, for them, fuels scientific inquiries and also determines their future. Pilgrim atheists could agree with the main part of the proactionary policy but not that theological background. In other words, although pilgrim atheists reject that theological genealogy, they do already mimic God (see chapter four).

All in all, if pilgrim atheism is based on theomimesis which metaphorically means that God gave man His knowledge, for tourist

atheists God gave man His very being. Slavoj Žižek in describing his 'atheist theology' says that

God does not give what he has, he gives what he is, his very being. That is to say: it is wrong to imagine the divine dispensation as the activity of a wealthy subject, so abundantly rich that he can afford to cede to others a part of his possessions. From a proper theological perspective, God is the poorest of them all: he 'has' only his being to give away. His whole wealth is already out there, in creation. (2009: p. 59)

The theological term for this process of self-emptying is the divine *kenosis* (Greek word for emptiness). Thus, following the term *theomimesis* which applies to the pilgrim atheists' ideal of 'getting into the mind of God', we can also talk about *theokenosis* which means mimicking God not in his objective knowledge but in his very *singularity*. Christ, in this sense, was not only the material representation of God but he was God's self-endowed to the world. Therefore, what happened during the *transfiguration* (the biblical term for Jesus and Apostol hearing God on a mountain calling Jesus His beloved son) was not about giving a special divine power to Jesus. It was about God self-emptying Himself. Thus, Christ became God and God is nothing but Christ. Accordingly, the moment that he, on the cross, cried out "my God, why have you forsaken me?", is the moment at which Christ understood that there is no God but himself. In other words, Christ became an atheist. God, after that moment, became an entity suffering for the sake of our redemption, but

the difference between the God of Christianity and the God of tourist atheism is that the second one never saves His son. This new God does not 'pull the strings' of the creation. We humans, Žižek believes, "are left with no higher Power watching over us, just with the terrible burden of freedom and responsibility for the fate of divine creation" (Žižek, 2009: p. 25). That process of self-emptying is at the centre of the works of tourist atheists (Boscaljon, 2010; Ward, 1998).

This type of interpreting the 'death of God' is a crucial point in tourist atheism which is relevant to the future of science. We human beings, for tourist atheists, are alone and responsible for the fate of the rest of creation. There is no other force, neither God nor nature, that can prepare us with a map for our journey. It is evident to us that an atheist, such as Žižek, does not accept the existence of God, but how can he reject the authority of nature? He believes that the true materialists should fully embrace the "ultimate void of reality" because they have accepted that no "substantial reality" does exist (Žižek, 2009: p. 97). Žižek, here, mostly based his ontology on the interpretation of quantum physics. That is, the quantum particles that "make up the atoms that comprise the 'solid' reality of the objects around us are, in themselves, fuzzy and undetermined" (Boscaljon, 2010: p. 6). The simplest articulation of this principle of 'undetermined matter' in quantum physics can be found in the double-slit experiment. In a nutshell, the experiment shows us that if we fire atoms to a screen in a way that they pass through a wall with two slits while we detect the process, the atoms will shape a series of light and dark fringes on the screen. It can be deduced that atoms must

move like waves otherwise they would have made only two fringes in the shape of the slits through which they have passed. But if we do the same experiment without any detectors, the atoms will act normally – there will be only two fringes on the screen. This second result shows that the atoms move as particles. The strange conclusion is that atoms change their behaviour depending on the presence or absence of a detector or witness. This mystery of un-undetermined matter is at the centre of quantum physics.

One of the philosophical implications of this physical theory is that when the very presence of the witness can change the reality, then the outside reality cannot be solid at all. Can we say that physical reality in its most components is incomplete? Žižek's answer is positive, and subsequently, he searches for an alternative ontology which can represent this new, intellectual position. He calls it the 'open ontology' which asserts that reality is essentially incomplete (see: Žižek, 2009: p. 99; Boscaljon, 2010: p. 6). The second important implication of that quantum mystery is about the role of the witness. In the end, it is the witness-scientist that needs to decide about the authenticity of the ultimate reality – i.e. whether two fringes on the screen are the distorted reality or multiples of them. This is in a way the end to the ultimate ideal of the scientist who witnesses reality from nowhere without any change in what really happens. This discovery of physics undermines the claims not only of classic physics but of all the existing sciences including biology. Hence, this new open ontology helps Žižek to reject the authority of not only God but also nature.

Let us return to the atheism discussion. How does this new ontology shape Žižek's version of tourist atheism? Žižek's intellectual project here parallels Sloterdijk's. Both want to rotate the cognitive platform of modern thought ninety degrees to see the backstage of religion. And there, they both find atheism to be the secret of religion. That is to say, they both reject Dawkinsean atheism for its direct rejection of religion, which Sloterdijk calls superficial and Žižek calls reductionist. Dawkinsean atheism is, to borrow John Gray's metaphor, like chastity: defined by what it denies (qut. in Žižek, 2009: p. 96). That is to say, pilgrim atheism concerns reason and is against religion. Alternatively, Žižek, as a tourist atheist, suggests turning Gray's argument around by asking this question: "what if the affinity between monotheism and atheism demonstrates not that atheism depends on monotheism, but that monotheism itself prefigures atheism within the field of religion?" (Žižek, 2009: p. 96). God, for him, is nothing but the symbolic representation of the material density. Therefore, the right formulation for atheism is not to reject God but to "refuse to accept the objective reality" (Žižek, 2009: p. 100). The clear formulation of this argument against God is understandable by using Kant's triad of positive, negative and infinite judgements. That is to say, the positive assertion is in what Christians believe: 'material reality *is not* all there is'. This means that in addition to the material reality, there are other higher and transcendental beings. Dawkins negates this statement by saying that 'material reality *is* all there is'. But Žižek negates it by infinite judgment: 'material reality *is non-all*'. We can re-write this triad by replacing reality (or *what there is*) with God:

(1) I believe in God, (2) I do not believe in God and (3) I believe in un-God. This third statement should represent tourist atheists' central idea but Žižek goes further by searching for an 'un-belief' which would make the right infinite judgement (Žižek, 2009: p. 101). So, the result is: 'I un-believe in un-God'. In a way, tourist atheists try to escape from the zero-one mode of thinking about God by using infinite judgement about reality and redefining materialism as the belief in the 'ultimate void of reality', which is another term for *theokenosis*.

5. A theoretical framework for the future of science

Both transhumanists and tourist atheists acknowledge the importance of the theological constitution of modernity and both try to activate that historical heritage for the sake of the future of modernity. Previously, I also mentioned traditionalism and *Radical Orthodoxy* as two schools that engage with theology; however, they tend more notably toward defending religion against modernity. What is common between these schools is their attention to theology. It seems that by the emergence of this new wave of theologically-oriented theories, we should expect significant changes in the field of science studies. First, the reductionist division between reason and revelation (which is always followed by the prioritisation of reason) will face significant challenges. While the first round of criticisms of the reign of scientific reason began at the end of the Second World War in the works of the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002), and the second round started in the works of analytic philosophers in the 1970s (McMullin, 1988; Wilson, 1970; Hollis and Lukes, 1984), the final round was initiated

by criticising the misreading of the history of science in the works of the pilgrim atheists by showing how science and religion are mixed together (Funkenstein, 1986; Fuller, 2010; Gillespie, 2008). Being successful in their criticisms, the recent intellectual movement will weaken the theoretically fundamental *reason versus revelation dichotomy* of pilgrim atheists through showing the role of theology in the constitution of modern science (that is, the science which has been considered the ultimate product of human reason without any contribution of religion). Following that, the political rivalry between pilgrim atheists (such as Richard Dawkins who defends 'reason') and religious apologetics (such as Alister McGrath who defends Christianity) is likely to lose its popularity. It is more likely that the new political division is between theomimesis and theokenosis, between transhumanism (as the progressive promoter of science) and tourist atheism (as the defender of individualism), or between proactionary and precautionary imperatives (see: Fuller, 2012).

I have set the tourist atheist ideology against the transhumanist one by attributing the posthumanist precautionary imperative to the former. I will argue for the attribution: how do tourist atheists face science? Do they support the precautionary principle or the proactionary one? What would be their reaction to the disasters caused by science? One cannot explain the tourist atheists' ideas about the future of science except by describing hypothetical situations. That is to say, since tourist atheists have not extended their ideas to the point that one can write about their attitudes toward science policy, we have no option other than

to construct their (to-be) policy by extending their core beliefs. For this, we need to work on the idea of *theokenosis*.

In other words, on the one hand, pilgrim atheists (who are either scientists or admirers of science) constructed a contradictory dichotomy between two types of truths: religious versus scientific. Inhabiting the realm of 'reason', they became hostile to the rival religious claim for truth. On the other hand, tourist atheists lack that hostility to religion because they challenge the Platonic idea of 'the truth', the ultimate reality and God, altogether. For them, a human being becomes God-like through representing his or her own unique singularity. The keyword here is freedom: freedom from truth, from God, from reality, from religion, and so on. Thus, a science which follows this path should not be about getting into the mind of God but about serving the personal wishes of gods who are walking on earth. It seems to me that the final consequence of expanding this logic is lowering the epistemic expectations from science. That means that *the will to control nature* and to manipulate even in human body will not benefit from any theoretical support in the doctrines of tourist atheists. Therefore, it is very likely that they will be on the precautionary side of the argument.

In summary, we can trace a political spectrum on the one side of which are the proactionary transhumanists and on the other side of which are precautionary tourist atheists and posthumanists. Fuller (2012) suggests that the proactionary/precautionary divide will be the new left and right of the twenty-first century. "One group will be grounded in the earth, while the other looks toward the heavens" (Fuller, 2012: p. 171). I

want to add that the transhumanism/tourist atheism divide makes the new ideological spectrum that is consistent with the aforementioned dichotomy. It seems to me that the question of taming the beast of science finds its answer in the proactionary/precautionary battlefield. The point is that one can tame the beast of science and use it for the good that made it in the first place-- a theological mode of approaching the world. The second generation of transhumanists return to those roots as believers, and tourist atheists as expropriators.

6. Conclusion

I started this chapter with *the question of science* which is about the right theoretical framework to understand the past, present and future of science. This framework, I have concluded, is going to be shaped in the debate between two types of intellectual positions toward the theological foundations of modernity. One of the effective argumentative contributions to this significant debate is that of transhumanists, who believe in the infinite extension of human powers to distinguish them from the rest of the animals towards being a god-like creature. The other contribution belongs to tourist atheists, who would support the precautionary principle which is about minimising the human manipulation of nature to minimise evil. As I mentioned, the similarity between both sides of this debate is their recognition of the theological foundations of modernity and its theoretical relevance in science policy. Their disagreement, however, is about the theoretical support of *risk* as the inherent motor-engine of science. Transhumanists are equipped with those theoretical tools through taking a theological Unitarian position into

account. That is to say, they adopt a positive theistic position which not only sees the historical affiliation between science and religion but also makes a religious judgement in favour of the existence of a supernatural being which is a unite and unique God (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014: p. 5). In this way they turn capitalism on its head by returning to the lost theological roots. That is to say, one can control the consequences of the capitalist form of life through rediscovering the lost faith behind it.

Chapter Nine

The Primacy of Training over Truth:

Sloterdijk approaches Rorty

1. Introduction

Previously I have reviewed Taylor's answer to the question about the plurality of options for belief and unbelief in the secular age. To answer the question of the co-existence and public representation of theism and atheisms, unavoidably we must refer to the broader context. How can the varieties of options of belief and unbelief live together in a secular age? Accordingly, I wish to extend my former pragmatist arguments in this chapter by referring to Sloterdijk's idea of the necessity of co-training.

If he were to criticise Jürgen Habermas's understanding of the role of religion in the public sphere, Richard Rorty could begin with two targets; first Habermas's separation of reason from action in the public sphere and secondly belief in a neutral secular reason which is something common somewhere inside all human beings. Rorty rejects both that separation and the existence of any kind of principle independent of human being. Likewise, if Peter Sloterdijk wanted to criticise Rorty's conception of the privatisation of religion, he could reject

Rorty's conception of religion as something that we do with our solitude. Sloterdijk alternatively, believes that religions are misinterpreted *anthropotechnic* systems of practice which have been designed to mould, enhance and generally *form* human beings (Schinkel & Noordegraaf-Eelens, 2011: pp. 18-19). One can assume a contemporary transition from an old modern *assumption* to a recent *hesitation*. On the one hand, the assumption of a universal, neutral and secular reason which is the basis of the exclusion of religion from the public sphere and on the other, the hesitation about the possibility of that secular reason and subsequent different levels of pragmatic engagement with religion (still without accepting religious truth-claims).

We might call this a post-secular transition. Post-secularism here scarcely means 'after secularism' or 'the end of secularism'. Rather, it is an intellectual movement of challenging the conception of *the secular as the neutral* (see the last chapter). This is the peak of a movement of hesitation about the adequacy of theories of secularism. As Calhoun puts it, it is an intellectual tendency to see the secular not merely as the normal and ordinary form of the world after the subtraction of religious illusions (Calhoun, 2012: p. 335ff; Taylor, 2007: p. 294). Alternatively, the secular is considered to be a sort of *presence*. Thus, it is *something* that has been shaped historically and like any other historical phenomenon needs explanation and elaboration (Taylor, 2011b: pp. 31-3). This transition recently caused Habermas to amend his formulation of the role of religion in the public sphere (Habermas, 2008; Calhoun, Mendieta & VanAntwerpen, 2013). Rorty's neo-pragmatist anti-essentialism does

resonate with the post-secular transition as well. As I will argue below, the post-secular transition also means that Rorty's defence of the Jeffersonian compromise (over the privatisation of religion) needs a serious reconsideration.

In this chapter I will try to put Sloterdijk's idea of giving priority to the Nietzschean concept of perfection against the Rorty's thesis of *the priority of democracy to philosophy*. In his thesis, Rorty supported the idea of exclusion of philosophical as well as religious truth-claims from the public sphere and wrote:

Just as Jefferson refused to let the Christian Scriptures set the terms in which to discuss alternative political institutions, so we [...] must refuse to answer the question 'What sort of human being are you hoping to produce?' (Rorty, 2008: p. 190)

I instead would argue for a thesis inspired by Sloterdijk's philosophy which I would call *the primacy of training over truth*. Concomitantly, I will argue that unlike Rorty's scheme, 'the primacy of training' is not based on the outright exclusion and privatisation of religion. This can be a way of real dialogue between the religious believers and non-believers in society. Like Rorty's Jeffersonian compromise, the primacy of training to truth proposes that no one, either secular or religious can enter the public sphere with his or her truth-claims. The difference between these two theses is that the latter sees democracy founded on (not a mere static trade of truth with freedom) but

a dynamic educational, co-working and co-training process through all the religious and irreligious exercises.

Sloterdijk, one might suggest, invites us to step back from the public sphere (i.e. the level of dialogue between different versions of truth) to a pre-truth area of exercise. This way of approaching democracy will shape a new public sphere which is based on the deep dialogue between different groups in society, not a mere trade off at the 'superstructure'. So the main question in this chapter will be; do we want constant and educational co-practice of different segments of society or a relatively fair trade off of some parts of everyone's beliefs to enjoy freedom? I will argue that if we want either of the options, we do not need to assume an increasingly problematic idea of a neutral secular reason. Secondly, if we prefer the former, i.e. co-practice and co-working, we need to give priority to utilising, what Sloterdijk called, anthropotechnics. Thus, this chapter tries to radicalise the Rorty's thesis of the priority of democracy to philosophy by trying to reconstruct a dialogue between him and Sloterdijk. That is a dialogue about the role of religion, ir-religion and atheism in the modern world that never took place during Rorty's life-time.

2. Rorty's atheism and exclusion of the Comprehensive Doctrines

The American controversial pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty's (1931-2007) version of neo-pragmatism⁴⁹ is distinguished by the

⁴⁹ During his academic life Rorty (1931-2007) was in a constant process of negotiation with other philosophers and frequently revised his former intellectual positions following these encounters with his colleagues. This broad-mindedness and intellectual flexibility can be connected to his general pragmatist view-point. Pragmatism for Rorty had at least three meanings: firstly, anti-essentialism applied to 'truth', 'morality' and

recognition of a transition in the history of philosophy; that is a transition from the Platonic conception of *truth* to the Nietzschean *act* (Rorty, 2007b). A set of other transitions, explained in Rorty's oeuvre, echo that philosophical shift. Those are the shifts, for instance, from 'general theory of truth' to contingency (Rorty, 2007b), from political ideal of redemption to the pragmatic ideal of maximum happiness for the largest number of people (Rorty, 2011: p. 13), etc. Additionally, there is yet another transition which Rorty makes during the last years of his life through a series of academic exchanges with Jeffery Stout, another American pragmatist, about the role of religion in the public sphere. That is the transition from atheism to anticlericalism. The Rorty of the first phase attached his atheism to what he called the Jeffersonian compromise. That is a compromise based on the privatisation of religion and its exclusion from the public sphere. The Rorty of the second phase, nevertheless, found out that 'atheism' is a quite essentialist term which was not going to fit into his general view of pragmatism as anti-essentialism (Rorty, 2003;

'knowledge' secondly, the view that there is not any metaphysical difference between value and fact, and more relevant here, "the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry" except "those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow inquirers" (Malachowski, 2002: pp. 83-4; cf. Rorty, 1982: pp. 162-165). Thus he was rejecting the age old correspondence theory of truth. For him 'foundationalism' in modern epistemology is closely related to that theory and he could not accept either of them (Malachowski, 1992: pp. 139-155; Guignon and Hiley, 1996: p. 339-364). Rorty consequently believed that holding an idea as essentially and 'objectively' true is a form of 'banging on the table' (Rorty, 2015). One cannot possess an birds-eye neutral point of view to confirm that our mind images of reality are corresponding with it (hence objectivity). As a pragmatist, he also believed that there is not any significant difference in terms of consequences between these two statements: 'it is true because it works' and 'it works because it is true' (Van Niekerk, 2013: p. 302). So instead of asking about the truthfulness of a statement we should ask "whether there are new ways of describing and re-describing the world that better serve our variety of goals" (Ryerson, 2006, p. 8). And as long as the conversation lasts we should hope for a new and more promising agreement and compromise. In this way, challenging one's own standpoint was the indispensable part of his pragmatism, not merely a supplementary element (Malachowski, 2002, p. 67ff).

2005). So he chose 'anticlericalism' as a political standpoint against the religious institutions (against an atheistic anti-theological position against the religious idea of the divine).

Let me begin with a common ground between these two phases. Despite his transition from atheism to anticlericalism, the Enlightenment version of rationalism remained one of Rorty's main targets of criticism all along. In fact, in his first seminal book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1993) he rejected any form of rationalism by trying to use and update some insights from three philosophers that he believed were "the most important philosophers of our century": Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey (Rorty, 1993: p. 5). Accordingly, the idea of human 'Reason' as 'an internal truth-tracking faculty' has been constantly criticised and rejected by Rorty. He held the idea that by contemplating on something inside us, or in our nature, that we would be able to find an indubitable truth (as Descartes suggested) or the idea that there is a stable inward truth which imposes limits on our empirical inquiry (as Kant believed) is philosophically unjustifiable (Rorty, 1993: p. 9). So in his atheist phase too, he was opposing the pilgrim atheist position. For, that is to say, Rorty could not be on the Sam Harris side of the argument in calling religion one of the sources of 'irrationality' and against science as a rational enterprise (Harris, 2005: p. 165; Robinson, 2011: p. x). Conversely, Rorty was seeing "human beings as historical all the way through" (Rorty, 2008: p. 176). So along with rejecting the theological quest of an ahistorical/metaphysical truth, he was also refusing to appeal to 'Nature' or 'Reason'. He believed that these concepts are the doubles

of God (House, 1994: pp. 9-22; Robbins, 2011: p. x). So the appeal to Nature or Reason would be “a misguided attempt to make philosophy do what theology failed to do” (Rorty, 2008: p. 181). That is, theology wanted to prepare us with a set of universal principles which would allow us to distinguish between either right and wrong or true and false. Rorty believed such principles simply do not exist. Thus neither theology nor philosophy can prepare us with a reliable, permanent and neutral framework for inquiry (Rorty, 1993: p. 380).

If he did not define atheism as an achievement for reason and ‘overcoming the irrationality of faith’, how did he actually define it? In his first phase which was around 1990s, he hardly defined the term. The central text here is a short essay called *Religion as Conversation-Stopper* (1994). The essay originally a critical review of the main thesis of a book by Stephen L. Carter called *The Culture of Disbelief* (1994). Carter in that book criticised the American limiting religion to the private sphere and considered it as a ‘trivial hobby’ that we do in our privacy. So the important and real decisions, Carter believed, are made in the public sphere with adults while religious people are considered to be not mature enough to bring their point of views to what Carter called the public square (Rorty, 1999: pp. 169-70). Rorty on the contrary, and quoting Whitehead, stated that religion is “what we do with our solitude” (Rorty, 1999: p. 169) but this does not mean that it is trivial. He showed compellingly that our family lives and love lives are also private but not trivial. So equalising *the private* with *the trivial* is not a valid formula (Rorty, 1999, p. 169-70).

Thus if religion is not trivial, why should it be marginalised in society? It seems that Rorty was convinced that the best way to have a healthy and free public debate is to drop our references to a text, the authority of which is not accepted by all members of that society. Yet his position was not based on the Kantian presupposition of a 'common reason' which is a universal bedrock and equally accessible by everybody. If we accept the existence of that common reason, we can conclude that the goal of free and open debate is to find or produce 'one right answer'. This was what the Enlightenment rationalists did. Nevertheless, this was not Rorty's answer. Several times, he approved Habermas's theory of the replacement of 'subject-centred' reason with a 'communicative reason' (Rorty, 1999: p. 173; Wolterstorff, 1997: p. 24). So Rorty's main proposal is a political one; how to "gain assent" from people who hold hugely diverse point of views, not how to discover one single true answer (Rorty, 1999: p. 173).

Therefore, so far, we can conclude that Rorty in his first phase did not base his atheism on either a sort of Enlightenment rationalistic idea or on rejection of religion as a trivial enterprise, dangerous illusion or mere prejudice. Moreover, he admitted that religion might be one of the ways of seeking 'perfection' for some people. However, he clearly stated that it was not his own option because he had not accepted the authority of the religious sacred texts. It seems that he was more tended to see his intellectual position as a result of his life experiences. That was a movement from seeking religious truth, to Platonism and finally anti-philosophy (Bernstein, 2010: pp. 200-216).

In his autobiography, *Trotsky and the Wild Orchids* (1999), Rorty recounted how as a teenager he sought some intellectual framework which would let him “hold reality and justice in a single vision” (Rorty, 1999: p. 7) which was an attempt to find some power to escape from high school bullies. When he failed to become religious he became convinced that Platonic absolutist philosophy would give him such a power.

It also seemed clear that Platonism had all the advantages of religion, without requiring the humility which Christianity demanded, and of which I was apparently incapable. For all these reasons, I wanted very much to be some kind of Platonist, and from 15 to 20 I did my best. (Rorty, 1999: p. 9)

Then he concluded that the rest of his life was dedicated to recycling the Platonic ideal. One aspect of the recycling project was to show the dangers of the presence of religion in public debate. It is dangerous not because it is an epistemological danger i.e. religion as a faulty reason. Instead, he used to see the religious or Platonic ‘mega-truth’ as a conversation-stopper.

So he attached his *atheism* to the defence of the exclusion of religion from the public sphere and said: ‘we atheists, are doing our best to enforce Jeffersonian compromise’ which was a compromise “that the Enlightenment reached with the religious” (Rorty, 1999: p. 169). That is the compromise that one keeps his or her religious beliefs for his or her private sphere.

[W]hen the individual finds, in her conscience, beliefs that are relevant to public policy but incapable of defence on the basis of beliefs common to her fellow citizens, she must sacrifice her conscience on the alter of public expediency. (Rorty, 2008: p. 175)

As mentioned above, he did not limit this exclusion from the public sphere to 'religious truth' and treated 'philosophical truth' in the same way. For instance he wrote:

Rawls puts democratic politics first, and philosophy second. He retains the Socratic commitment to free exchange of views without the Platonic commitment to the possibility of universal agreement [...]. He disengages the question of whether we ought to be tolerant and Socratic from the question of whether this strategy will lead to truth. He is content that it should lead to whatever intersubjective reflective equilibrium may be obtainable, given the contingent make-up of the subjects in question. Truth, in the Platonic way [...], is simply not relevant to democratic politics. (Rorty, 2008: pp. 191-2)

Thus, Platonic philosophical truth is as irrelevant to the political public sphere as the Scriptures while both can be followed by people in their private lives. Let us use 'comprehensive doctrines' as a handy Rawlsian catchphrase to describe both versions of truths (Rawls, 2010: p. 205; Wolterstorff, 1997: pp. 90-1). This way of reading Rawls was the

basis of Rorty's doctrine of *the priority of democracy to philosophy*, that is, Rorty believed that such an exclusion of the comprehensive doctrines from the public sphere is at the heart of the Jeffersonian compromise⁵⁰ (Rorty, 1999: p. 170).

Here I need to emphasise a crucial point: Rorty did not call Jefferson's idea of religious tolerance a 'doctrine' or a 'principle'; rather, he always referred to it as a *trade* and *compromise* (Rorty, 1999: 170; 2008: 175-191; 2003: p. 141-149). Yet again a pragmatist and political term: one *trades* some aspects of his or her comprehensive doctrine with freedom of belief and practice. This trade, like any other trade and exchange in the market of society, is the result of the past intersubjective negotiations of 'radically situated individuals and communities' (Rorty, 2008: p. 189). Consequently, it is all about making something work, not *discovering* or unveiling something *a priori*.

One of the results of choosing the market rhetoric is that he also needed to talk about 'the *price*' of the *trade*. He acknowledged that the result of this trade of perfection with liberty might not be that heroic:

⁵⁰ Rorty used Thomas Jefferson as a symbol of the Enlightenment privatisation of religion because of a quotation from him that says: "it does me no injury for my neighbour to say that there are twenty Gods or no God" (Rorty, 2008: p. 175). But it is noteworthy that many philosophers, intellectuals and specifically the Enlightenment figures said more or less the same thing; and those are the people that deserve to take the credit for the principle of tolerance. Rorty, nonetheless, preferred a politician to be the symbol of the doctrine. It seems that in this way he wanted to remain loyal to his main post-philosophical/ post-truth pragmatism. That is to say, it does not matter who talked about this principle and formulated it philosophically but the politician who practiced that doctrine and brought it to life should be the main figure. So Jefferson is more relevant than, say, John Stuart Mill who for the first time used the term in its modern sense (Forest, 2012).

[E]ven if the typical character types of liberal democracies are bland, calculating, petty and unheroic, the prevalence of such people may be a *reasonable price* to pay for political freedom. (Rorty, 2008: p. 190—*Ital.* Mine)

Rorty's disagreement with another Nietzschean intellectual, Peter Sloterdijk, can be indicated exactly at this moment of negotiation over the price of the Jeffersonian trade.

3. Sloterdijk and primacy of perfection

Rorty and Sloterdijk could be really quite in agreement in certain aspects. For example, both challenged the Platonic conception of truth⁵¹ and believed that there is not any teleological, theological or transcendental goal for man's cultivation. So there is not any truth or authentic self that needs to be discovered as many ancient Greeks and teachers of Abrahamic religions suggested. Also and positively, both

⁵¹ Sloterdijk just like Rorty cannot be in more agreement with Nietzsche on his conception of truth. Nietzsche answering to the question of the quiddity of truth wrote:

A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding [...] to be truthful, that is, to use the usual metaphors. (Nietzsche, 1997: p. 92)

That is to say, for Nietzsche, the weak have made up those metaphors to survive (Mendieta, 2012a: p. 65) but with the eclipse of God any reference to 'substantive truth' will be problematic (Hatab, 2008: p. 11). In the same vein, Sloterdijk does not invite us to engage with any sort of comprehensive doctrine. Conversely, in his first influential project, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987) he preferred a cynical resistance of Diogenes against the Platonic idealism. Diogenes refused the language of the philosopher not by a better or more philosophical language but by living against it through showing "contempt for fame", ridiculing the architecture and refusing to respect (Sloterdijk, 2008: p. 103). Socrates wished to begin a conversation with Diogenes because he was the dominant master of refutation through dialogue. This was Diogenes, though, that never fall into the trap. For Sloterdijk, Diogenes's cynical materialism was the "dirty materialism" in which animalities challenges the public square to overcome the idealist arrogance (Sloterdijk, 2008: p. 105).

argued that what remains to be defended is the idea of man as a self-forming animal. Nevertheless, Rorty and Sloterdijk come to the parting of the ways when the latter uses Nietzsche's overman (*übermensch*) as the basis of his main thesis in a book called *You Must Change Your Life* (2013). That is something that does not fit well into Rorty's American version of pragmatism because it does not simply presuppose the shallowness of life and the existence of unheroic characters in society as an acceptable price for liberty. In fact in an interview Rorty made a distinction between 'good Nietzsche' and 'bad Nietzsche' and said: "The stuff about the Overman can safely be neglected [...]. There is still a lot of valuable stuff left in his writings" (Rorty and Mendiata, 2006: p. 93). Sloterdijk instead reads Nietzsche mostly through the emphasis on the overman and his main contribution is to suggest that man creates himself not through work as Marx suggested but through practice and exercise (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 212) and religion is only one way of doing those exercises (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 10). He ingeniously argued for the necessity of rotating the modern cognitive stage ninety degrees and to focus not on the comprehensive doctrines (i.e. the 'superstructure' of religious claims about an afterlife and so on) but on the 'anthropotechnics' which have been defined as domestication of humans by humans (Mendieta, 2012a: p. 72). Anthropotechnics became important at the age of (as Mendieta named it) hyper-humanism⁵² which is the age of intensification of the Renaissance idea of man creating himself through education and training (Mendieta, 2012a). So Sloterdijk, puts perfection

⁵² Sloterdijk's original term is *überhumanismus*.

ahead of any knowledge or truth claim. The idea of training through spiritual exercises is yet another step forward in Sloterdijk's projects of focus on 'design'. Latour believes that with Sloterdijk's question of *design* we have returned back to Prometheus but in a different way:

it is so important to talk of *design* and not of construction, creation or of fabrication. To design something [...] allows us to raise not only the semiotic question of meaning but also the normative question of good and bad design. This is true of DNA manipulation, as well as of climate control, gadgets, fashion, cities or natural landscapes, a perfect case of design from beginning to end. (Latour, 2011: p. 161)

The idea of designing oneself through training comes after Sloterdijk's other controversial readings of Plato and Heidegger on "how humans voluntarily and deliberately put themselves in 'theme parks', 'human zoos'" (Mendieta, 2012a: p. 72). He maintains humans are the only animals that can design and re-design themselves, and as Plato believed, in this way they become an 'earthly copy of the True Shepherd' i.e. God (Sloterdijk, 2009: p. 27).

Approaching all this with the Heideggerian rhetoric of human breeding, one might legitimately hesitate as to whether 'perfection gained through training' is just another name for a dangerous 'comprehensive doctrine'? Or indeed, we might wonder whether there is any direction for training? One might ask who has the authority to give us the order 'you must change your life' (or any other order at this level)? Sloterdijk is

cautious in his interpretation of overman not to reproduce a pseudo-theological transcendental being. He warned the readers of Nietzsche that:

As always when reading Zarathustra, one should not be misled by the evangelizing tone. These are not neo-religious instructions, but rather directions for the neo-ascetic trainer.

(Sloterdijk, 2013a: 112)

The overman is an acrobat that invites the modern man to look upwards and 'up' in this context is wherever that the overman is active (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 116). This invitation is for getting closer to "an extra-human dimension" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 115) not anything beyond. Just like an acrobat that makes people to look up to see him walking on a tightrope. For the same reason, the tightrope of the acrobat, red carpet of Hollywood celebrities or catwalk of fashion models are technically not that different (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 116). Thus, activity, *áskēsis*, asceticism and training are vital, but not their direction, because there is not any right direction (i.e. there is no Platonic truth). A human being, is for Sloterdijk, just like Nietzsche and Rorty, a self-making, self-shepherding and self-fencing animal. But the specific emphasis of Sloterdijk is on the idea of training as "de-spiritualized asceticism" or "Methodism without religious content" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 335). That is a sort of training for the sake of nothing beyond training.

In his appeal of training, Sloterdijk sees religion as an isolator. That is something that saves us from the sheer boredom of shallow everyday life and gives us a few incommensurable and extraordinary

moments. In Sloterdijk's point of view, this is the main function of (formerly called religious⁵³) anthropotechnics (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 94). They distinguish between the ordinary and extraordinary. While in those extraordinary moments human beings find an opportunity to create themselves.

So, an acrobat's main message would be 'do not be indifferent to the difference between perfect and imperfect' or trained and untrained (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 28) and it is precisely this demand for perfection that Rorty cannot put ahead of liberty. Rorty's doctrine of *the priority of democracy to philosophy* is the expression of indifference to perfection not in a trivial sense but as irrelevant to the public life. It seems to me that Sloterdijk instead tends to define gaining perfection in a quite public way. In answering the above question about the authority that orders us to make ourselves (in the last chapter of his book), he suggests that there is not any authority which can order us to change our lives except for the 'global crisis'. Many contemporary thinkers see the global financial crisis, climate change or the different political crises of the last couple of centuries only from the perspective of the disasters that they caused (Beck, 1992; McKibben, 2000). Sloterdijk, however, believes that the twentieth century was the most 'instructive period' of history in terms of man-made catastrophes, that is, they were instructive because they were failed experiments that taught us something that we could not grasp without some sort of action (Sloterdijk, 2013a: 444-445). We can learn from past mistakes and we should do so to in order to be able to cope

⁵³ We should recall that Sloterdijk believes that religions do not exist. What exist is only anthropotechnic systems.

with the new mistakes that we will make in the future. There are varieties of responses to these crises. However, for Sloterdijk, one sort of response is outmoded; the time for the romantic brotherliness of communism and the Enlightenment varieties of universalisms are gone. What has survived from all those ideologies (specifically communism) are a few correct ideas. One of those correct ideas is the necessity of a “*horizon of universal co-operative asceticisms*” (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 452—*ital. Mine*). So it seems to me that what Sloterdijk likes in communism is the idea of seeing our fellow humans as “co-workers” not merely “passengers of the fool’s ship of abstract universalism” (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p.451). The aim is to survive the crises of what Ulrich Beck called ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992). Sloterdijk “makes clear, [that] this survival is only possible through *co-operative áskēsis*” or public asceticism (Mendieta, 2012a: p. 76—*Ital. Mine*). Why is that? Sloterdijk supports his Nietzschean answer with a historical narrative. The history of modernity, if not seen only through its failures, is the best evidence of the effectiveness of co-asceticism. For this we need to look at a fourteenth century movement and its connection to the modern time.

The idea of training firstly appeared in religions and especially in the monasteries. At some point, nonetheless, it spread into society and included laity into the game. Sloterdijk emphasised the role of the *devotio moderna* movement which was begun by the nominalist priests and pupils of Ockham such as the Roman Catholic friar Geert Groote (1340-1384). The movement, which sought to popularise mysticism, moved from the monasteries to the cities and promoted the idea of the imitation

of Christ (MacCulloch, 2010: chapter 10; Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 331ff). The movement which bridged nominalism to the forthcoming Reformation, did not abandon the Scriptures but promoted the idea that the sole Scripture is not enough. One needs to imitate Christ in his or her everyday life. The idea of imitation of the 'God-man' served "as a sublime attractor for the laity" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 331). In the following centuries, the spiritual and Christian character fades away but the ascetic aspect of ordinary life still remained, untouched. Sloterdijk, sees this transition of asceticism to the cities as lying behind the constitution of modernity:

Modernity, which could never be anything but radical, secularised and collectivised the practising life by breaking the long-standing asceticisms out of their spiritual contexts and dissolving them in the fluid of modern societies of training, education and work. (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 331)

So, both de-spiritualised and collectivised asceticism turned into the modern conception of training. He explained the modern predominance of the West in the same way. One cannot only blame it on 'imperialism'. The 'deeper reason' was that "the people in this part of the world who, because of their head start in practice, forced all other civilisations on the planet to join in with the training systems they had introduced" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 335). In another book *In the World Interior of Capital* (2013), Sloterdijk, argued that the "the pragmatic heart of the Modern Age was located in the new science of risk-taking" (Sloterdijk, 2013b) which is totally related to the secular conception of God-man. The God-man would be able to see himself as able to take huge risks and invest, for example

in ships, many of which would sink, and to invest on a journey from Western Europe to the other side of the globe. The goal might be to outdo rivals, but the response to this goal was bold and required a 'long-distance vision, long-distance speculation and long-distance winning'. It is in this context that the imperial motto of Charles V is understandable. The motto was: "*Plus oultre* [Further beyond], stimulated a form of thought concerned with seeing and proceeding not simply far, but fundamentally ever further" (Sloterdijk, 2013b: p. 51). Thus, they were successful not only by giving a collective definition of training but also by forcing other nations to accept their forms of training, risk-taking and long-distance vision. What remained after the last four centuries might perhaps be some bitter experiences and also achievements which are unmatched in human history. All in all, Sloterdijk following Nietzsche does not think that crises and disasters are there to make us more cautious. On the contrary, they call for more training and more preparation.

Again, Rorty in his first phase could not accept the necessity of this shared goal of achieving perfection and might even have considered it as a dangerous plan specifically with regard to our freedom. But Sloterdijk is not worried about re-reading communism and other failed ideologies of the past century in terms of their few valid points.

4. Co-training ahead of trade

It seems to me the formerly taken for granted terms and conditions of the Jeffersonian trade became doubtful under the new conditions following 9/11, indeed, to the point that even Habermas "one of the most influential theorists of secular modernity", with all of his former hostility to

postmodernism, could not resist embracing “a new discourse of ‘post-secular’ societies” (Casanova, 2013: p. 27). So we need to put the Sloterdijk’s theses at the background of the sea change that the emergence of the post-secular theories brought about. Post-secularism is still a very controversial term. So one’s definition of the term depends on his or her general view on the secular and also the role of secular reason in the public sphere. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will review some of the definitions of post-secularism and in conclusion I will argue for the last definition which is the most general one. That is to say, post-secularism is a form of consciousness regarding the historicity of the secular: considering the secular as a historical phenomenon which needs explanation and contextualisation (Gorski, Kyumn, Tropey & VanAnterpen, 2012; Milbank, 2006). For now, let me continue with this primitive definition of the term.

Regarding the standpoints on secular reason, we might perhaps use the metaphor of a road line to illustrate the debate like so: so Rawls is someone who strongly believes in such an entity and stands on one side of the road, however, Habermas, Taylor and Rorty are half-way across the road, while Sloterdijk is standing on the other side. Rawls held the idea of common reason and supported the exclusion of the comprehensive doctrines from the public sphere. After the post-secular turn, Habermas became concerned more about the inclusion of religious people in the public sphere. However, ultimately he defended the idea of a secular reason and the necessity of the translation of religiously specific vocabularies into the common secular language. Taylor expanded this

inclusion by asking for a radical redefinition of secularism and challenged the dichotomy of the religious versus the secular. Rorty was comparatively less concerned about the fairness of the trade but his anti-essentialist position pushed him into his second phase in which he accepted the full presence of religious claims in the public sphere. Lastly, Sloterdijk, finished the job by the revolutionary suggestion of going one step backwards from the public sphere and considering *co-training* in the 'background culture' or civil society. Co-training, arguably, will change the shape and form of the debates and discussions in the public sphere. So, while Habermas and Taylor's versions of post-secularism were more concerned with the inclusion and accommodation of the marginalised religious people in the text of modernity, Sloterdijk's version was about co-practice of all members of the society.

We can use the football field example to clarify Sloterdijk's contribution. Rawls, Habermas, Rorty and even Taylor were debating about, say, the fair rules of the game. Extending this metaphor, Rawls emphasised the authority of the fair referee (i.e. public reason), Habermas more focused on equality between the participants and Rorty rejected the existence of a neutral referee while underlining the arbitrariness of the rules of the game. Although, he could see that some rules are better than the rest. Finally, Sloterdijk changed the subject of the discussion and focused on the players and the effects of their pre-game warm up and exercise on the shape and beauty of the game.

To explore the line of this spectrum of intellectual positions, we must begin with Rawls. In his revision of the idea of public reason (1997)

he began with the presupposition that “a basic feature of democracy is the fact of reasonable pluralism” (Rawls, 2010: p. 205). That is to say, as a result of a democratic system a variety of ‘comprehensive doctrines’ will emerge in society. So how is it possible to have a peaceful society with all these differences in definitions of truth? That is the question of deliberative democracy, that is, “how public deliberation can bring about agreement without exclusion under conditions of pluralism?” (Lafont, 2013: p. 231). Rawls’s answer was to counter the “zeal to embody the whole truth in politics” on the basis of presupposing a public reason which is a shared element among all citizens of society (Rawls, 2010: p. 206). In his work, *Political Liberalism* (1993) Rawls suggested that religious reasons can be offered by religious language in the public debate over fundamental political issues, but only if they are backed by political reasons and can be translated into the language of public reason (Rawls, 2011). For instance, President Lincoln could have used the Biblical quotations in his debate with Stephen Douglas in 1858. Rawls asks:

[W]hy not? Certainly they were debating fundamental political principles about the rights and wrongs of slavery. Since the rejection of slavery is a clear case of securing the constitutional essential of the equal basic liberties, surely Lincoln’s view was reasonable [...] while Douglas’s was not. (Rawls, 2011: p. 484)

So he strongly endorsed the ideas of the existence of a universal reason and the neutrality of the state regarding all the comprehensive doctrines while he tried to find a way for believers to offer their faith-

based products in a public debate. Thus, one does not need to drop his or her references to the holy texts of his comprehensive doctrine to the point that his conviction is 'reasonable' thus defensible in the public sphere.

There are several other ways of dealing with the question of the plurality of the comprehensive doctrines in the public sphere. Let us begin with Habermas's latest answer and criticism of the above-mentioned Rawlsian famous proviso.

4-1. Habermas and the gap between reason and action

One of the problems of the Rawls's trade is emphasised in Habermas's 2008 book *Between Naturalism and Religion*. Habermas hesitates about the fairness of the trade of some parts of the comprehensive doctrines with freedom and cites Rawls's own line in his hesitation about its feasibility.

How is it possible... for those of faith... to endorse a constitutional regime even when their comprehensive doctrines may not prosper under it, and indeed may decline.
(qtd. in Habermas, 2008: p. 123)

So where does the problem emerge in Rawls's proviso? The point is that the comprehensive doctrines are not mere 'doctrines'. They are primarily 'sources of energy' that "the person of faith taps into performatively to nurture her whole life" (Habermas, 2008: 127). Even more than this, Habermas approves Wolterstorff in the belief that religion for the believers is their social and political existence (Habermas, 2008: p.

128). So, a secularist who supports the exclusion of religious beliefs from the public sphere in fact supports the suppression of some part of the very existence of the believer which for Habermas is a 'compelling objection' to secularism (Habermas, 2008: p. 128). While the same thing, for Rorty in his first phase, was considered to be a reasonable price that the believer pays for his or her freedom.

Habermas's solution, instead, is that we need to define, what I call, a three step scheme for both secular and religious members of the society. The religious people should first of all accept the fact that they are no longer living in a religiously homogenous society with a 'religiously legitimated state', that is, the necessity of the *recognition* of the secular age. Moreover, in modern times most of their beliefs have been subject to severe criticism, scrutiny and unmasking. So the former certainties do not exist in the society as a whole (Habermas, 2008: p. 129). After this acceptance of the modern condition, it is up to the religious community to decide if the past experience of a dogmatic approach to the cognitive challenges of modernity has been successful or not (Habermas, 2008: p. 137-8). This helpful approach to secular society is only possible, Habermas argues, through the reconstruction of their sacred truth in the light of the modern condition (e.g. giving priority to secular reason, embedding the egalitarian individualism and universalistic morality into their comprehensive doctrines). This is possible only through a *self-reflective* process from inside of their traditions (Habermas, 2008: p. 137). So, to my mind, he has hinted that no one else can accomplish this second task on behalf of the believers. And finally he talks about a project

of *translation*. That is to translate the vocabulary of a particular religion to a more generally accepted and accessible language (Habermas, 2008: p. 131-2). However, the religious citizens are “only obliged to do so *if they want their reasons to count in the legislative process*” (Lafont, 2013: p. 238—*ital. Original*)⁵⁴. In the context of the informal public sphere, though, Habermas proposes to eliminate the task of translation (if the translation is impossible). In any case, following several criticisms regarding the exclusion of religious people from full-participation through ascribing and imposing too many tasks to them (Lafont, 2013: p. 233), Habermas emphasises that the burden of translating religious to non-religious reasons should not only be on the believers (Habermas, 2008). Accordingly, *all* citizens must take religious reasons seriously and consider their possible truth –as was the case for Lincoln’s theological arguments for the abolition of slavery.

Instead, the three steps for the team of secular players in the field of the public sphere, according to Habermas, include, first, political *tolerance* which is necessary but not enough. The second step is *adaptation* which is different from tolerance in terms of being an active cognitive burden on the secular members of the society. Finally, they also need to be *self-reflective* to transcend the secularist self-understanding. That is to say, secular citizens should not just presuppose the existing

⁵⁴ In response, Lafont hesitates over the possibility of translation of the religious vocabulary into secular language. She convincingly argues that: “translation *presupposes* that it is possible to come to the same results by different epistemic means” (Lafont, 2013: p. 237—*ital. Original*). Nonetheless this presupposition is very problematic. Moreover, if the translation is possible only in a few cases of overlapping between the secular and non-secular proposals, then the very process of translation becomes unnecessary.

situation as a given. They must actively follow the goal of overcoming the “rigid and exclusive secularist self-understanding of modernity” (Habermas, 2008: p. 138).

This ‘revised framework of citizenship’ that Habermas proposes, accompanies the belief that we have entered into a post-secular society. That is, a society which is epistemically adjusted to the continued existence of religious communities. As Casanova argued, post-secularism for Habermas neither means re-sacralisation of the world, nor religious revival. What he means by this term is “becoming reflexively aware of [...] secularistic self-misunderstanding” (Casanova, 2013: p. 33). So actually it is a sort of consciousness regarding the formerly prevalent Western misconception that modernisation will unavoidably end in secularisation (Casanova, 2013: p. 30-3). So the proposed ‘complementary learning process’ is a sort of furthering that reflexive understanding. Accordingly, both secular and religious citizens should participate in a process of mutual learning to transcend their limitations in a society that does not ‘naturally’ go towards one certain goal.

At this juncture, one main critical point (inspired by Sloterdijk’s *the primacy of perfection*) is this: by putting forward this proposal, Habermas reverses the relationship between reason and practice. He asks us to start the mutual learning from the most controversial point, that is, being self-reflective regarding comprehensive doctrines. From there he ended up in the process of mutual learning. This is a large and ambitious normative plan that, as Herrera Lima argued, is unlikely to gain acceptance and approval from either side (Herrera Lima, 2013: p. 50ff).

That is to say, he saw the necessity of a real dialogue and mutual exchanges in society but he preferred to address it fundamentally by a prophetic invitation of asking every group in the society, either secularist or religious to amend their own version of truth. While his criticism of Rawls was that the comprehensive doctrines are not mere doctrines. They are highly different sources of energy and sometimes inner spiritual experiences. Thus, it is hardly enough to simply ask people to amend those sources of energy and ecstasy following the new condition.

In other words, in the Habermas's scheme there is a gap between *action* and *reason*. On the issue of deliberative democracy, he clearly stands on the reason side. For instance, in his debate with Robert Audi this gap has been acknowledged by Habermas. Audi in a chapter on the situation of religious people in a liberal democracy wrote:

It might still seem that motivation should not matter if the quality of one's reasons is good enough [...]. But I would stress that insofar as we are thinking of the advocacy or other public behaviour as supposed to be action *from virtue*, we should look not just at what kind of action it is and what can be said for it abstractly, but also at how it is grounded in the agent's *character*. As Kant distinguished acting merely in conformity with duty and acting *from* duty, and Aristotle distinguished [...] actions that *express* virtue from those not virtuously performed but merely 'in the right state', i.e. of the right type, we should distinguish actions from civic virtue morally, one may, within one's rights, advocate as coercive

course of action without being motivated by an adequate secular reason for that action; my contention is that to do so is not always consonant with civic virtue. (Audi, 1997: pp. 32-3—*ital.* Original)

Actually Audi draws upon Rawls's 'duty of civility'. This duty, which applies in public spaces, requires citizens to "forgo reliance on their own more comprehensive worldview or on empirical data whose validity depends on such a view" (Menko Pogge and Kosch, 2007: p. 140). For example, a religious person might believe that abortion is the cause of the corruption of the soul or a secular nationalist might strongly believe that refugees are a threat to the authentic culture of his or her country. Audi radicalised this duty to the point that he suggests that secular reasons "must be strong enough to direct the citizen's own behaviour" (Habermas, 2008: p.126). For example, when voting in an election, one should act independently from religious motivations. Habermas answers:

[T]he link between the actual motivation for a citizen's actions and those reasons he cites in public may be relevant for a moral judgement of the citizen, but it has no import for assessing his contribution to maintaining a liberal political culture. For in the final analysis, only the manifest reasons have institutional implications for the formation of majorities and decision-making within the relevant political bodies. (Habermas, 2008: p. 126)

So for Habermas, only those ‘issues’, ‘statements’, ‘facts’, and ‘reasons’ count in contributing to the intersubjective process of making a political decision. Thus, he prefers to ignore the proposed harmony between reason and action (Habermas, 2008: p. 126-7). Arguing for the primacy of training, I would like to support Audi’s stance on the conjunction and harmony between those two – nonetheless for a radically different purpose. This is the basis of Mouffe’s criticism of Habermas: “agreement is established not on significations (Meinungen) but on a form of life (Lebensform)” (Mouffe, 2010: p. 273). So, the fusion of voices through *acting* is what makes a common form of life possible not just *seeing* each other’s point. Audi, rightly, referred to the Greek philosophers like Aristotle. Since the Greek philosophers were certainly not what Kant called ‘artists of reason’ (Hadot, 2002: p. 258). Philosophy for them was a way of life:

In order to understand the philosophical works of antiquity, we must take into consideration the particular conditions of philosophical life at that time. We must discern the philosopher’s underlying intention, which was not to develop a discourse which had its end in itself but to act upon souls. In fact, each assertion must be understood from the perspective of the effect it was intended to produce in the soul of the auditor or reader. (Hadot, 2002: p. 274)

Thus the goal of the antique philosophy was not only to enlighten people’s mind but to *form* people’s soul and to *direct* their behaviour. Also in the Europe of fourteenth century, Petrarch distinguished ‘artists of

reason' from philosophers who are living their philosophy and try to confirm their knowledge with their actions. What the Renaissance figures (especially Petrarch and Erasmus) had in mind as models were Socrates, Diogenes as well as John the Baptist and Christ (Hadot, 2002: p. 262-3). The idea of the separation of reason from action in a form that Habermas defends is probably invented by Descartes (Hadot, 2002: p. 263).

Put differently, philosophy from its beginning was a system of anthropotechnics. Therefore it was a series of methods of mental and physical exercises by which humans "have attempted to optimize their cosmic and immunological status in the face of vague risks of living and acute certainties of death" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 10). As argued above, for Sloterdijk it is only the *crisis* that has the authority to order us to change our lives. And what is the most severe crisis for human beings other than the fear of death. Philosophy from its dawn was obsessed with the crisis over the fear of death; as Cicero famously put it: "to philosophise is to learn how to die" (Critchley, 2008: p. xv). Simon Critchley's interpretation of this quotation shows how philosophy was from its beginning a sort of training, not just a series of bourgeois theoretical contemplations. Critchley believes that Cicero showed that the main task of philosophy is "to prepare us for death, to provide a kind of training for death, the cultivation of an attitude towards our finitude that faces [...] the terror of annihilation" (Critchley, 2008: pp. xv-xvi). Yet from another point of view, Audi's example of the Greeks is interesting. We know that the works of the antiques whether philosopher, Sophist or tragedian were written to be read out, mostly in the public

square (Hadot, 2002: p. 274). So the close relationship between *writing* and *speech*, philosophy and lecture, theoretical thought and practical performance was one of the main characteristics of the antique forms of thought. In the light of these historical facts regarding the attachment of reason and action, the Sloterdijk's revolutionary back step would not be a completely innovative suggestion. Indeed the Habermasian separation of reason and action is a more recent phenomenon—and at least from the Sloterdijk's point of view an implausible phenomenon.

All in all, Habermas gives a much more nuanced proposal regarding the Jeffersonian compromise in comparison with Rawls and Rorty (in his first phase). Habermas sees that one cannot easily forget some parts of his or her comprehensive doctrine and simply exchange it with political liberty. Even if it were possible, it would not be probable and even Rawls would have perhaps seen it as a problematic issue. For Habermas postsecularism is consciousness about 'the secularist self-misunderstanding' (Casanova, 2013: p. 33). Moreover, he intends to accommodate "religious claims in liberal institutions" through a process of complementary learning (Rosati and Stoeckl, 2012: p. 3).

4-2. Taylor, Rorty and the principle of neutrality

Taylor and Rorty will, if pressed, say that they are against the idea of a series of neutral secular principles which means that they are consequently against the Rawlsian conception of reason. From there it would be simple for both to show that when Habermas suggests a sort of translation of religious statements from the specifically religious vocabulary to the language of the public sphere, he presupposes a

version of a neutral language and thus a neutral, universally valid, *a priori* principle. After reviewing Taylor and Rorty's similar criticisms of those presuppositions, I will argue that both their definitions of 'the secular' need to be radicalised even further. There I will suggest that again the thesis of *the primacy of training over truth* is helpful. Accordingly, the problem with the demand of a secular and neutral reason was not only that it was not considering the historicity of the very concept of pure reason. But also, the passive tone of the rhetoric of *inclusion* (of the marginalised, the religious, the minority etc). Both Rorty and Taylor are concerned more about the trade and its fairness than with the production of powerful and trained players. I would suggest that the centrality of training in Sloterdijk's scheme is a much more active interpretation which (like Habermas) suggests a 'mutual learning' but not through a series of negotiations on the most problematic truth-claims. Learning from this point of view does begin at the practice level. Hence it is the result of co-training and public cultivation of the habits of success.

Let us begin with Taylor's 2011 chapter on secularism. For the first step he in fact returns to Rawls's question but recognises a fault in his answer. Rawls's question was concerning the diversity of comprehensive doctrines in a modern secular pluralist society. So the secular for him, as for Habermas, gives us a neutral principle and language that every person in society can understand. Rawls's presupposition was that it is because there is something called common reason in all people. Taylor, like Rawls, accepts that the emergence of the idea of the secular (as the neutral) was an answer to the question of *diversity* in a modern society (in

which citizens with different religions and non-religious beliefs live together). What Taylor rejects in the works of Rawls is a rather fragile distinction between an ordinary secular reason (or 'reason alone') and religious special languages (with some "extraneous premises that only believers can accept") (Taylor, 2011a: p. 49).

What are we to think of the idea, entertained by Rawls for a time, that one can legitimately ask of a religiously and philosophically diverse democracy that everyone deliberate in a language of reason alone, leaving their religious views in the vestibule of the public sphere? The tyrannical nature of this demand was rapidly appreciated by Rawls, to his credit. (Taylor, 2011a: p. 49)

Taylor believes that one of the consequences of holding the distinction between one universal ordinary secular reason and varieties of religious specific languages is that if in the process of public debate the secular and the religious people come to one conclusion, the religious side would be superfluous. But if they disagree on something then the religious conclusions will be considered to be disruptive and dangerous (Taylor, 2011a: p. 49). So holding this distinction leads to the belief in the neutrality of the secular which is problematic and 'tyrannical' in character. Moreover, he does not seem to support empirical scientific facts as the basis of neutrality as well. In his response to the critics of *A Secular Age* (2007), Taylor states that the idea of scientific neutral facts cannot disprove religion. He does not see himself refuting, say, pilgrim atheism by refuting those reductive theories of warfare between religion and

science. Metaphorically he instead believes that he is “trying to kick away a crutch on which some atheists want to lean, so that they can walk into a more fruitful debate” (Taylor, 2010: p. 406).

Taylor sees the root of *fetishisation of the principle of neutrality* and exclusion of religious from the public sphere in what he calls the unjust *fixation on religion*. That is to say, many Westerners hold a wrong model through their defining of the secular. So people think that secularism is something about the state and its relationship with religion while in fact it is a response to the ‘democratic state of diversity’ (Taylor, 2011a: p. 36; Calhoun, 2011: pp. 75-6). So logically, if even we equalise the secular with the neutral, on the political level we cannot only exclude religion. Rather, we should think of all comprehensive doctrines from the public sphere. The value statements either Biblical or Marxist or Kantian are on a par with each other. Thus a law in a parliament cannot begin with either “as God said in the Bible...” or “as Kant argued...” (Taylor, 2011a: p. 50). Accordingly, a question will come to mind: so what is the reason of this fixation on religion and insistence on the distinction between the secular on the one hand and the religious on the other hand?

In response to this question, Taylor suggests that the root of the problem of the fixation on religion is in the history of the constitution of the secular, specifically in France and the US. So, in the historical context “certain institutional arrangements can appear to be untouchable” (Taylor, 2011a: p. 46). And for example, the French version of secularism came about during a harsh and bloody struggle with the institution of the

Catholic Church. Therefore, in the year following the French revolution, the separation of the Church from the State turned into a moral principle. Moreover, religion assumed to be an epistemologically 'faulty reason' and 'politically dangerous' phenomenon. Regarding the latter question, Taylor suggests that we should focus more on *the goals of secularism*, than to a certain historically constituted institutional form (Taylor, 2011a). He also argues that there are three goals for secularism (as a response to the question of deliberative democracy in a pluralist society). These are the French Revolutionary trinity: liberty, equality and fraternity. So Taylor's secularism would be about maximising our three basic goals through an unending process of negotiation with others (Taylor, 2011a: p. 51). In this negotiation, it seems to me, he wants to question the French version of *laïcité* with reference to, for instance, the exclusion of Muslims. This criticism though is based on reference to fraternity (or the necessity of the inclusion of the other) as a goal (Taylor, 2011a). Thus our age for Taylor is a secular age. He nevertheless gives a specific definition of it which does not contain any sort of neutral principle on the one hand and does not exclude religion on the other hand. He believes that the secular age is an age in which our practical self-understanding gone through profound changes (Taylor, 2007: p. 542). Our self-understanding constitutes as a result of a series of responses to the questions such as 'how we fit into the world or into society'.

Either religious or irreligious, Taylor suggests, we share the *practical* self-understanding that we are in a self-sufficient immanent constellation of orders: cosmic, social and moral (Taylor, 2007: p. 543).

That is to say, these orders are understood on their own without reference to the intervention of the outside. A society for Taylor is secular, “in so far as religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others and thus is contestable” (Smith, 2012: p. 154). He normatively suggests that inside ‘the immanent frame’, we should try to maximise our fundamental three goals through negotiations and trying different sorts of institutional arrangements. So fixation on the exclusion of religion to make sure that we have a healthy democracy is not justifiable in Taylor’s scheme.

As argued at the beginning of this chapter, through all of his life Rorty could totally agree with Taylor on his criticism of ‘neutrality’ (Gross, 2008: p. 19). But in his first phase he undoubtedly was one of the exemplars of those intellectuals who fixated on religion and considered religion particularly as a conversation-stopper. Rorty himself recognized this problem. So after around 2003 we can talk about Rorty of the second phase who was not calling himself an atheist, did not connect his defence of atheism to the Jeffersonian compromise and moreover, rejected the idea of any sort of exclusion of religious people from the public sphere (Rorty, 2003; Stout, 2010).

After receiving several criticisms over his review of Carter’s book, Rorty revised his former position in two chapters, *Religion in the Public Square* (2003) and *Anticlericalism and Atheism* (2005). The first chapter has been written as a response to criticisms of Nicholas Wolterstorff (1997) and Jeffrey Stout (2010) which, as Rorty admitted, ‘impressed’ him. Rorty acknowledged that his response to Carter was ‘hasty and

insufficiently thoughtful' (Rorty, 2003: p. 141). Then he went on to explore the difference between two types of usages of the term 'atheist'. For him the first type of philosopher who call themselves atheists are those that think that the divine is an 'empirical hypothesis'. So the existence of the divine can be refuted by the results of the empirical sciences (Rorty, 2005: p. 33). Rorty evidently has never been one of the members of this group. He adds that:

[T]here is a second sort of philosopher who describes himself or herself as an atheist. These are the ones who use 'atheism' as a rough synonym for 'anticlericalism'. I now wish that I had used the latter term on the occasions when I have used the former to characterize my own view. For anticlericalism is a political view, not an epistemological or metaphysical one. It is the view that ecclesiastical institutions, despite all the good they do [...] are dangerous to the health of democratic societies. (Rorty, 2005: p. 33)

In fact, this is a reaction to Stout's criticism that an anti-essentialist pragmatist like Rorty cannot criticise 'religion *per se*'. For the good reason that such a pragmatist cannot talk about *anything per se* (i.e. anything *in itself*). There is not any essence for religion that one can discover and then judge that religion is essentially a conversation-stopper, dangerous or even peaceful and democratic etc (Stout, 2010: p. 524). So sweeping generalisations about religion and its role in the public sphere are not helpful at all. One can also talk about fascinating historical examples of religion playing significant roles in the emancipatory democratic

movements. Such as the case of the American Civil Rights movement which was inspired by Christianity (Stout, 2004: p. 300).

Rorty of the second phase still emphatically insisted on his own political stance on, say, the case of the homosexuals' rights. He believed that those religious people that express their views against homosexuals by referring to the Bible should be ashamed of themselves and their assertions should be considered as 'hate speech' (Rorty, 2003: p. 143). Approving the arbitrariness of all intellectual and political positions, he wished that he could find a principle to differentiate between different ways of reference to the holy texts. But he admitted that such a principle does not exist. He added:

I wholeheartedly believe that religious people should trim their utterances to suit my utilitarian views [...]. [But] I do not think that it is helpful to say that the homophobes are being 'irrational'. So I view the struggle between utilitarians and homophobic Christian fundamentalists as no more a struggle between reason and unreason than is the Catholic-Protestant struggle in Northern Ireland. (Rorty, 2003: p. 144)

Thus, Rorty in his second phase became much more consistent regarding his own version of anti-essentialism. While in his first phase he believed in strictly abandoning the references to the religious texts in the public sphere and again considered it as another 'reasonable price' for freedom (Rorty, 1999: p. 173), in his second phase he wrote: "neither law nor custom should stop either of us from bringing our favourite texts with

us into the public square” (Rorty, 2003: p. 143). It seems to me that he was persuaded that more than anything, this type of fixation on religion is a problem. That fixation is the conversation-stopper, not an abstract entity called religion *per se* (Stout, 2010: p. 532).

Now we can conclude that we are facing two types of utopias. Rorty’s utopia is a not-religious secularist utilitarian utopia. That is, in Taylor’s words, a closed reading of *the immanent frame* (Taylor, 2007). Stout instead described his vision of the ideal society in this way: “my dream is to revive the sort of coalition between religious groups and secular intellectuals that I first experienced when I joined the civil rights movement as a teenager” (Stout, 2010: pp. 524-5). Stout’s vision contains the necessary radicalism that Sloterdijk needs for his suggestion. A coalition, political co-working, making change through co-practice towards one political goal, these are the values of Sloterdijk’s dream society.

Consider the tone of Taylor’s invitation to the reconsideration of the inclusion of Muslims by more focus on the goal of fraternity. This is a passive demand. It asks for a re-writing of the main text of Western modernity by adding the excluded margin which is becoming increasingly important. Just like the presence of Muslims in the West. At this historical moment one cannot reject seeing them. One either should opt to defend the ‘authenticity’ and ‘purity’ of the European culture or consider some level of inclusion. The former option would be like racism, as Stuart Hall defined it i.e. a form of discourse which tries to expel the Other, at least symbolically (Hall and Du Gay, 1996: p. 5). While this option is not

plausible, the latter can be interpreted in either passive or active ways. A passive inclusion is what has been explained in different versions of the political doctrines of tolerance. Both Taylor and Rorty of the second phase can be put in this category. Rorty, on the one hand, defends the difficult (but necessary) tolerance of the religious fundamentalists who he thinks 'should be despised'. Moreover, Rorty expressed his sadness that he cannot appeal to any 'principle' to persuade the fundamentalists to adopt his version of utilitarianism (Rorty, 2003: 143-4). Taylor on the other hand defends a 'painful' process of revision of secularism as an answer to the question of diversity, not to the question of religion (Taylor, 2007; 2011). What is shared here is the lack of any mechanism of inclusion beside an uncomfortable process of negotiation. This would be understandably a painful and unpleasant process because it begins from the very comprehensive doctrines and diverse versions of truths. That is to say, any negotiation over one's source of energy would be understandably insufferable. Now I would argue that what makes the negotiation possible is the active usage of those energies to follow the common political goals. That is an active and shared movement which would be a public exercise for a common good. Unlike what Taylor and Rorty suggested, we, Sloterdijk would perhaps say, do not need more negotiations, but more co-actions.

In an imaginary situation, Gandhi and Martin Luther King as two Hindu and Christian fellow citizens could hardly come to terms with a reasonable price for their freedom. They could, for instance, meet up at a university and try to find some ways of living together peacefully by

ignoring some parts of the teachings of those religions. But the real Gandhi and Luther King were extremely successful in their own lives in attracting people from different backgrounds, races and nationalities to one specific way of pursuing a political goal (Nojeim, 2004) which, was the non-violent technique of fighting for freedom and equality. This is a successful historical example of what Sloterdijk called co-practice and co-training.

5. Conclusion

To wrap up the discussion, we might ask what the existing options of democratic co-existence are. Is there any principle, argument or process on which we can all agree? As shown above, Rawls would say that one can distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable arguments. So, there is something called reason inside all human beings which can be addressed. Being a universal criterion, reason can distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable statements either philosophical or religious. The tyrannical character of this criterion, as Taylor argued, is obvious. That is to say, religious arguments *per se* are not considered to be relevant. If they are, it is because they happened to be in agreement with the secular side. Habermas, for his part, suggested a cohesion in which all sides of a public debate should amend some aspects of their own comprehensive doctrines. As has been shown, it is a painful and somehow impossible project. Because the comprehensive doctrines are not just some ideas in one's mind. They instead are sources of energy. Taylor, alternatively, could not find any valid argument to fixate on the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. This fixation however

does have some historical roots in the French Revolution but now is the time to move on and reinterpret the tripartite motto of liberty, equality and fraternity. Reinterpreting the last one especially would be helpful. The point about Taylor's scheme was that he never defined any mechanism for his dialogue.

All of these figures have, using Taylor's metaphor, kicked away a crutch on which Rawls's reason and principle of neutrality were leaning. Thus, there is not any trustworthy reason, an inside human nature, a universally valid principle, or a shared conception of transcendence. In this context, Rorty and Sloterdijk's arguments are relevant and provocative. One can think of the contrast between them in terms of a gap between two types of approaches to the measure of the success of a democracy. Rorty believed that there *are* such measures but they are not eternally true. Namely, that political controversies can be brought back to 'the first principles'. Nevertheless, only if we define 'the first principles' as some *former compromises* that are still valid this will help us to "seek common ground in the hope of attaining agreement" (Rorty, 2008: p. 190). He also insisted that the learned lessons from former experiences are not philosophical truths or religious ones. The citizens, instead, "will simply get some hints about what to watch out for when setting up their next experiment" (Rorty, 2008: p. 196).

Sloterdijk's could also agree with Rorty except that he maintains the difference between the trained and untrained. What we have learned through the crises of the past two centuries, for example, were some hints about handling the future crises. Nonetheless, those hints are useful

only if we are qualified enough to be able to do something with them. However, he, unlike Rorty, believes in a measure of the success of a democracy i.e. more skilful, more trained and more self-formed citizens. Thus, Sloterdijk radicalises Rorty's emphasis on self-formation by giving priority to the result of former experiments. *A democracy will be successful when it makes well-formed citizens.* Therefore, taking for granted the unheroic results of a democracy as a 'reasonable price' for freedom is a sort of self-defeating argument. Assuming self-formation as a measure of the success of a democracy, the Jeffersonian compromise over the privatisation of comprehensive doctrines does not seem to be able to remain untouched. So we need a new compromise and a new experiment. Sloterdijk's thesis of 'primacy of training' gives us a hint about the forthcoming compromise. The hint is that there is not any universally valid principle to lean on. If it was possible several hundred years ago to be united under one single authoritative doctrine, it increasingly becomes challenging in our secular world to be so. Thus, suggesting a return to a religious 'golden age' is as obscure as simply forging a universally valid reason on which everyone could rest. Only when we kick away that crutch, does a meaningful co-walking and co-practice becomes possible. Sloterdijk's main contribution here is to draw attention to anthropotechnics which, by the way, distinguish early Christians from the modern religious radicals. The early bishops designed monastic rules according to which people lived for almost two thousand years (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 158), while modern radicals only find their position in the modern public area unfair and passively demand inclusion.

Sloterdijk's invitation is to act by saying "one does not criticise mountains. One climbs them or stays at home" (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 158). Modern religious radicals would prefer to stay at home; and, accordingly, they are similar to the seculars who ignore anthropotechnics for the sake of the fear of religious dogmas or the ideological nightmares of the past century. Sloterdijk believes that for both of these groups, all mountains are evil. At this juncture, what is important is to move from the passive rhetoric of trade on the basis of a common secular reason to an active approach of co-training and preparing ourselves to cope with the new crises.

Chapter Ten

A Post-Secular Reading of Public Sociology: a way to co-practice

1. Introduction

Engaging with the public is the shared element of both types of modern atheisms. Both pilgrim and tourist atheists are the writers of best-selling books, directors of documentaries and the users of social networks with millions of followers. This chapter is dedicated to the evaluation of the sociologist's public engagements. In this chapter, I will argue that there are two theses originally put forward by Burawoy (2005) but which still need to be highlighted; those are the necessity of challenging the assumed neutrality of the social sciences and also the necessity of public engagement in the form of encouraging co-practice in society. I will suggest that an idea of a much needed post-secular public sociology is the result of such reading of Burawoy's thesis.

It is noteworthy that the idea of opening sociology to other modes of post-secular theories also needs public engagement. Michael Burawoy (born 1947) believes that open and free dialogue will lead us to deepen our internal democracy (Burawoy, 2005 and 2007). It is true that we need to recognise 'others' at least as eligible to be heard and as an equal

people. Public sociology, as he suggests, would be an unconditional dialogue and negotiation between several scholars who represent a multiplicity of narratives of truth and their counterpart public societies, and the final outcome will be more inclusive of the suppressed and the unheard (Burawoy, 2005). Let us say it in this way: in the past sixty years many marginal movements tried to rewrite the text of modernity by including themselves, as in the case of the excluded women. For example, Simone de Beauvoir (1967), Donna Haraway (2013) and Luce Irigaray (1985), and in the case of excluded former colonial societies, Edward Said (1978), Gayatri Spivak (1999) and Homi Bhabha (2004), and for, excluded ethnic minorities, John Rex (1973) and Stuart Hall (2007). Below, however, I will argue that public sociology, which is at the centre of current sociological discussions, needs something more than the demand of the inclusion of the marginalised groups. Following my previous chapter on Sloterdijk's thesis of the priority of co-training, I would argue that public sociology could be read as a plan for active public engagement and co-practice.

In the first part of the chapter, I will highlight the arguments on the rejection of the possibility and also on the plausibility of the neutrality of the social sciences. I will begin with the definition of post-secularism which in the broadest sense of the term has been regarded as as a challenge to the idea of neutrality of the secular. That is to say, post-secularism can be used as a term to address the intellectual scepticism about the possibility of fabrication and construction of a secular space *somewhere outside all the comprehensive doctrines*. I will argue that the

most effective argument for post-secularism in this sense has been put forward by revealing the historicity of the secular. I mean, the secular has been a historical invention related to a certain socio-political climate of a certain part of the world. It served as an intelligent resolution for some historical tensions (i.e. European Confessional Wars) among certain social forces. In the second part of the chapter, I will show how the conception of post-secular as a challenge to the idea of neutrality could couple with practice and with what previously has been called the second side of Prometheanism i.e. self-creation. Accordingly, the suggestion is that challenging the ideal of neutrality would pave the way for co-practice. I will try to make my point by reviewing the intellectually overlooked experience of one of the classic Middle Eastern public sociologists (i.e. Ali Shariati) who led massive socio-political changes as a result of his public engagements.

2. Post-secularism as a challenge to the idea of neutrality

Sloterdijk begins his *You Must Change Your Life* with a Marxian warning: “A spectre is haunting the Western world” but for him, unlike Marx, that is the spectre of religion (2013a: p. 1). He points out that a series of post-secular theories flourished after 9/11. Sloterdijk rejects their promises of a form of religious revival in the modern world. Through rejecting the idea of the ‘re-emergence of religion’, he proposes that if we consider religions as ‘misunderstood spiritual regiments’ we should conclude that the distinction has never been between believer and non-believer. The true distinction is between ‘the practicing’ and ‘the untrained’ (Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 3). And if there is no revival of religion,

then talking about post-secularism is futile. Approving his deeper distinction, we still can, I would suggest, use the term post-secularism in a different and useful sense. That is to say, and as stated above, post-secularism does not simply mean a 'revival' of religion. It means the consciousness about the problematic nature of the theories of secularism. Furthermore, it can be considered as a challenge to the idea of *the secular as the neutral*.

Sloterdijk's understanding of post-secularism like any other understanding of the term depends on how he defines *the secular* (a modern epistemic category), *secularism* (a world view or ideology) and *secularisation* (conceptualisation of modern world processes) (Casanova, 2011: p. 54ff). Thus, we need to distinguish different ways of using the term. There are many categorisations of the secular, two of which hold more importance. The first one is by Beckford and the second one by Casanova.

Beckford distinguishes six clusters of usages of the controversial term post-secular (Beckford, 2012): 1. Secularisation deniers who believe that it was never a reliable conception of the processes of social transformation. 2. A progressive interpretation which sees post-secularism as a development which builds on the achievements of both religion and secularism. 3. Post-secularism as a new return of the sacred (similar to what Calhoun called 're-sacralisation'). 4. Post-secularism as the era of return of religion to the public sphere. 5. The fifth category is rather vague and, for this reason, Beckford does not seem to be successful in finding a suitable title for it. So he uses the titles of "politics,

philosophy and theology". He also put Habermas in that category. Habermas, however, can be safely placed under the fourth category. By the way, Habermas's version of post-secularism, which I will write about below, is more about democratic politics and lack of human solidarity than about religion *per se*. Indeed, this is the point of the fifth cluster of theories. 6. Finally, the last cluster contains critical, sceptic and negative points of views. The most serious of which is Ingolf Dalferth's depiction of the post-secular state as *indifferent* to the division of religion and irreligion. This point of view, though, is different from mere neutrality. So, for him, the fact of the existence of religion and irreligion is of no particular importance in an alleged post-secular society (Beckford, 2012: pp. 1-13). One can easily see how inclusive and helpful this typology is. However, I still prefer the second typology by Casanova.

Casanova distinguished three meanings of the term secular and consequently three senses of the term post-secular (2011: p. 60; 2013: p. 27ff). Firstly, *mere secularity* in the broadest sense of the term originated from the very Medieval Christian use of the term *saeculum*. The Middle Age use of the term secular as temporality, in fact, was not used in contrast with religion. Understandably, they used to juxtapose this concept with eternity (Calhoun, 2012: p. 340). Thus, they were able to distinguish between ordinary priests and secular priests. The latter group, unlike the former, did not take vows of chastity and poverty. Instead, they could live in wider society. So they were still considered to be devout Christians but the ones who lived in the cities and among lay people, not in the monasteries. The prevailing idea during the Middle Ages was that

human flourishing was something to be attained with restricted religious ascetic rules inside the monasteries. Some branches of the lay or secular priests, mostly in late Middle Ages, tended more towards popularising asceticism. These cleric movements are linked to the modern idea of secular self-creation. Let me say it in this way, in its modern sense the term secular turning into a positive interpretation and confirmation of worldly life and considering it as 'the place for human flourishing' (Milbank, 2006; 2013). Taylor's description of the emergence of 'exclusive humanism' refers to the final outcome of the transition of those monastery ascetic ideals and skills to the cities. From one perspective, 'exclusive humanism' or the emergence of the idea of self-flourishing detached from any sense of higher being was partially the result of the mission of secular priests to *remake society* according to ascetic life (Taylor, 2007: pp. 150-160; Sloterdijk, 2013a: p. 150ff). Be it as it may, the first meaning of the term secular would be the classic idea of not-religious, temporal and inner-worldly.

If we define the secular in this general sense, as *mere secularity*, then the first meaning of post-secular would be the re-sacralisation of the world (Casanova, 2013: p. 30). This is what Sloterdijk understands by the term post-secular and consequently rejects it. My general view is that no one is going back to the Middle Age monasteries and the world will not become re-enchanted. I think that most of today sociologists would also agree that there is not enough evidence for a positive process of 're-sacralisation' of the world (cf. Zuckerman, 2008; Joas, 2014). For example, Zuckerman conducted empirical research in Denmark and

Sweden about people's belief in God and their practicing of religion. He did that using 149 formal interviews (Zuckerman, 2008: p. 184). In the conclusion of the book, he nonetheless describes the contemporary societies of those Scandinavian countries in this way:

Most people [of the research sample] don't believe much in God, don't accept the supernatural claims of religion as literally true, seldom go to church at all, and live their lives in a largely secular culture wherein death is calmly if not stoically accepted as [a] simply natural phenomenon and the ultimate meaning of life is nothing more or less than what you make of it. (Zuckerman, 2008: p. 183)

One cannot predict if this situation will massively change in the future or not. One cannot also extend the result of this research which has been conducted in a couple of Western European countries to the rest of the world and the researcher, in fact, was over-cautious not to make any sweeping generalisation. However, one can arguably conclude that even if the revival of religion is taking place in some parts of the world, that currently there is not enough evidence of religious revival in some other parts. So it is not a universal trend (Zuckerman, 2008; chapter 8; Smith, 2012: p. 164).

The second meaning of the secular, Casanova argues, is what Taylor understands by the term. That is the *self-contained secularity* which is the phenomenological experience of living in the immanent frame, that is,. "an interlocking constellation of the modern differentiated

cosmic, social, and moral orders” (Casanova, 2013: p. 30). So it is the result of a transition from a medieval society in which the belief in God was the unproblematic and unchallenged standpoint of most of the members of the society which has been replaced by recent modern society in which being religious is just one option among several others (Casanova, 2013: pp. 30-1; Taylor, 2007). Consequently, the post-secular in this latter context would imply what Peter Berger described as ‘de-secularisation’ (Casanova, 2013: p. 31; Berger, 1999). Also the term post-secularism as has been used in the field of international studies has the same connotation (See: Mavelli and Petito, 2014).

Casanova called the third category the *secularist secularity*. It is closely connected to the term *secularisation* as a specific philosophy of history that turns the specifically Western historical experience of secularisation into “the teleological process of human development from belief to unbelief” or from the irrational to rational (Casanova, 2013: pp. 32-3). In his 2008 book, Habermas criticised the recent conception of the secular. Thus post-secular for him implies “reflexively abandoning or at least questioning the modern secularist [...] consciousness” (Casanova, 2013: p. 33; Habermas, 2008). Habermas, like Berger, sees secularisation as an exceptionally European conception. Convincingly, he argued that there are three recent changes in modern societies which need addressing: firstly, the belief in the necessary disappearance of religion does not seem justifiable anymore. Secondly, “religious organisations can function as ‘communities of interpretation’ in the public arena” (Beckford, 2012: p. 8). Finally, the integration of immigrants with

traditional backgrounds is considered to be problematic. So, according to Habermas, we need a process of complementary learning to correct the insufficiency of the past theories of secularisation which I wrote about in the previous chapter (Rosati and Stoeckl, 2012: p. 3).

Habermas's scheme also contains some levels of openness towards religious claims. Massimo Rosati, for example, builds on Habermas's conception of complementary learning. In his project, Rosati separates three stages: absolute *abandoning* of the specifically religious vocabulary which in fact is not intended by Habermas. The second stage is *tolerance* of the other which is necessary but not enough. Finally, what Rosati suggests is a type of *mobilising* religious vocabulary and imaginary through a critical review of the existing religious resources from within (Rosati, 2012: p. 61ff). So the Habermasian post-secular research projects focus on the inner religious potentials to modernise religious consciousness through a process of negotiation with the secular other. Thus the goal of such a post-secular society would be *co-existence* and *co-presence* through the processes of translation and inner-modernisation of religions.

Beckford, appropriately, criticised Habermas's scheme by asking two questions. First how religion could be defined so all interested parties would be happy. It is noteworthy that 'religion-in-itself', does not exist. There are varieties of social phenomenon called religion because of their 'family resemblances'. Secondly, and related to the former point, Beckford asks; while Habermas was always critical of fundamentalism and the New Age tendencies:

...one wonders whether he thinks that the post-secular applies only to relatively tolerant and liberal forms of religion. It remains to be seen where the outer limits of Habermas's willingness to tolerate and listen seriously to religious values and beliefs are located in the so-called post-secular age. (Beckford, 2012: p.9)

Beckford also pointed at an important issue in an increasingly connected modern world in which the comprehensive doctrines are divergent such that finding an overlapping consensus becomes increasingly challenging. It will not be easy for Habermas to give a criterion which simply divides the fundamentalists from the tolerant religious groups. Even if it is possible, what are the limits of openness toward their narrative of truth? This is a crucial question that leads us to the point that I made when discussing the thesis of *the primacy of training over truth* (see chapter nine). That is to say, one does not need to be intellectually in agreement with others to co-act with them.

As mentioned above, Sloterdijk rejected and abandoned the concept of the post-secular in its first meaning. What makes Sloterdijk's project different, from one point of view, is his disagreement with Habermas's project of 'complementary learning'. He replaced it with a totally different conception of *co-practice* and *co-working* which is defined as something beyond merely flaccid co-existence with religion. It is a sort of *re-occupation of anthropotechnics*. If 're-occupation' seems an aggressive term one can use Sloterdijk's own term of co-training, co-working and co-practice, that is to say, disregard of one's own belief

system. His scheme is different from Habermas's because it is not an invitation to tolerance. It is, instead, an invitation to go beyond the dichotomy which constructs believer versus unbeliever and recognise the underlying dichotomy of trained versus untrained. So the action might be in agreement with some religious teaching, and might be prescribed by some belief systems or not. Either one likes it or not, the action itself is determining. Consequently, one can prescribe not to enter into the public square only with one's truth-claims. The goal should be co-action not mere persuasion.

I want to push this critical point one step further. There is a fourth meaning of *the secular as the neutral*. Thus, post-secular can be interpreted as *a consciousness about the impossibility of neutrality*. This means that the secular will remain as an option in the modern world as Taylor described it. It will not however consider being the neutral context of interaction of all other value-laden comprehensive doctrines.

The conception of *secular as neutral* has emerged historically as an intelligent resolution for the horrors of the Confessional Wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Accordingly, the secular was an impartial place of neutrality. That was somewhere outside of religious dogmas and diverging interpretations of the Scripture. So, all religious groups can be agreeing on this (Michea, 2009; Calhoun, 2012; Milbank, 2013).

However in its original form it was a political resolution but it also was translated into cognitive terms; Hence, scientific 'facts' where

considered to be something beyond any dispute. Historically speaking, Milbank shows, the idea of 'pure reason' (and accordingly 'pure scientific fact'), has emerged as a shadow of pure faith. That is to say, one cannot find the idea of 'pure reason' in antiquity. Ancient Greeks were never interested in a 'value-free' enquiry (Hadot, 2002). Their philosophy was rather a mode of 'spiritual practice' (Milbank, 2013: p. 20). However, there was an idea of purely rational enquiry that Jew, Muslim and Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages projected back onto antiquity which was actually their own invention-- or let us call it a *misreading*. The interesting question would be how this conspicuous misreading occurred. Milbank's explanation is that it was easier for them to sympathise with, and utilise the ancient philosophy if it was a result of 'pure human reason' not linked with the ancients' pagan belief system (Milbank, 2013: p. 22). Still, before 1300, there were no dichotomy between reason and revelation among the Christians. So, a "more complete reasoning was itself situated within an entire 'life according to the *Logos*', such that the monastic life was often equated with *philosophia*" (Milbank, 2013: p. 23—*ital.* Original). But after the scholastic movement and specifically by nominalist theology and the detachment of the natural from the supernatural, the duality played a more important role (Dupré, 1993). Specifically, we should recall that purity of faith has always been part of the teachings of Abrahamic religions. So the dichotomy was mostly used to criticise so-called 'Aristotelian pure reason' for the benefit of pure faith. However, this preference has been changed in modern times and the imagined 'pure reason' considered to be the basis of universal peace and tolerance.

What Taylor called *subtraction stories* were the cornerstone of the modern conception of *the secular as the neutral* (see chapter three). Thus, it has been imagined that if all the dogmatic illusions (including religious ones) are disappeared what remains will be ‘pure fact’, ‘pure reason’, ‘pure nature’ and ‘pure individual/thinker’ etc. (Taylor, 2007). So, the secular does not have any history. It rather is just there outside waiting for us to put aside our ideological glasses. Accordingly, the most intellectually suitable way to challenge those stories would be to show the historicity and evolution of the secular.

One can argue that one of the current trends of post-secular critique is dedicated to challenging different forms of subtraction stories. Calhoun, for instance, rejected the myth of neutrality by challenging the myth of ‘the secular as an absence’ not a presence (Calhoun, 2012: p. 351). This kind of approach to the secular as something which has been constituted historically led to Casanova’s project of *sociology of the secular* (Casanova, 2011: p. 54). The mission of the proposed research field would be to recognise and distinguish the historical and sociological differences between varieties of versions of the secular in different countries in the past two centuries (Warner, Van Antwerpen and Calhoun, 2010). For example, the secular emerged as a sort of ‘distance from religion’ in the Western Europe. Nonetheless in India it has been defined with ‘the equity toward religion’ which includes “equitable state subsidies for Hindus, Muslims, and others” (Calhoun, 2012: p. 337). Yet the American understanding of the secular was designed to protect religious differences and “helped to create a sort of marketplace for religions”

(Calhoun, 2012: p. 336). Generally, post-secularism means going beyond a historically constituted misconception, the act which opens the horizon for more researches. It seems to me that Sloterdijk's Nietzschean line of thought is sympathetic to this type of disenchantment of the modern mythologies.

3. The legitimacy of a post-secular public sociology

Contemporary social theory is a chaotic field in terms of the divergence of the foundational value judgement of each school of thought. Feminist social theory and post-colonialism along with cultural studies, on the one hand, and the semi-positivist movements of the Strong Program in Professional Sociology⁵⁵, on the other, are only a few examples of those diverging value commitments. By emphasising this theoretical chaos, an essential question would be: is there any standard sociological insight to be invoked by the public sociologists? Is there any neutral sociological point of view about social 'facts' that the public sociologists are going to promote in the society? If not, what is the use of public sociology? In this section, I would support the idea of a *post-secular public sociology* and I would suggest that its seeds existed in Burawoy's original thesis as well.

To answer those questions we need to initially answer this question: what is public sociology? Burawoy, the past president of *the American Sociological Association*, in his presidential address of 2004 talked about the idea of *public sociology* which, in the decade that

⁵⁵ Jonathan Turner, David Boyns and Jess Fletcher are defending a kind of value neutral professional sociology and call it the Strong Program in Professional Sociology (see: Nicholas, 2007: pp. 119-48).

followed, became one of the central discussions of sociologists all around the world. Burawoy believes that sociologists have spent a century making professional knowledge by “translating common sense into science” and now is the time for back-translation (Burawoy, 2005: p. 5). That is to say, public sociology is a way of turning sociology into a “moral and political force” which is able to make real changes in society through sharing the basic insights of social theory with people (Burawoy, 2005: p. 6). Nevertheless, Burawoy emphasises that this does not mean that public sociology is the negation of professional sociology. Quite contrarily, they both complement each other perfectly (Burawoy, 2005: p. 5). There cannot be public sociology without professional sociology because the latter prepares “legitimacy and expertise” for the former (Burawoy, 2005: p. 10). Public sociology, in return, builds constructive dialogue between sociologists and the public through which each adjust to the other. This process of dialogue is ideally a mutual understanding in which the sociologist not only teaches something but also learns from the people. The reciprocity and mutuality is essentially part of an ideal dialogue. Moreover, the ideal speech condition is equal. That is to say, persuasion depends on nothing beyond the best argument. However ‘equality’ in this sense is a necessary fiction which never takes place in the real world. Burawoy also recognises the inherent inequality and differences in the process of the public engagement of sociologists. But he suggests that the combination of professional, public and also critical sociology will make a more moderate version of sociology. The function of critical sociology, as the third type of sociological efforts, is to show the biases of

professional sociology and to suggest alternative foundations for social theory (Burawoy, 2005: p. 10). The fourth type of sociology is policy sociology which is a sociological knowledge in the service of a goal defined by a client which might be either government or the private sector. Finally, Burawoy believes that critical sociology, on the one hand, is the conscience of professional sociology and public sociology, on the other hand, is the conscience of policy sociology (Burawoy, 2005: p. 10).

Nevertheless, still a question remains untouched: is there any standard sociological insight that public sociologists need to share with the public? Burawoy's answer is that such a standard sociological insight and message does not exist.

The multiplicity of public sociologies reflects not only different publics but different value commitments on the part of sociologists. Public sociology has no intrinsic normative valence, other than the commitment to dialogue around issues raised in and by sociology. It can as well support Christian Fundamentalism as it can Liberation Sociology or Communitarianism. (Burawoy, 2005: pp. 8-9)

Accordingly, he rejects the seeking of neutrality or any demand of a 'pure sociology' which is beyond any public engagement (Burawoy, 2005: p. 16; Burawoy, 2007: pp. 318-22; Turner, 2007). Alternatively, Burawoy seeks a kind of 'value science' and in support of this idea writes: "in the contemporary world a sociology hostile to values, politics, diversity, utopias, and above all to publics no longer makes sense – if it

ever did” (Burawoy, 2007: p. 317). Thus, he recognises that opening the Pandora’s Box of public engagement means to enable a huge social transformation. Moreover, he prescribes that quarrel.

Probably the most controversial part of Burawoy’s idea is when he adds that sociology *must* defend the interests of humanity by defending *civil society* against the “*state* despotism and *market* tyranny” (Burawoy, 2005: 24—*ital.* mine). We might wonder where this obligation comes from. On the one hand, Brint (2007) persuasively shows that Burawoy’s claim is rhetorical not analytic (Brint, 2007: p. 247). Brint adds that it is not quite evident why we should ‘defend humanity’ only in the civil society. Furthermore, it is not easy to define concepts such as humanity, civil society and social justice with much precision (Brint, 2007: p. 247). On the other, McLennan (2007), criticising the shortcomings of Burawoy’s project, pinpoints those leftist values of Burawoy’s which led him to determine a liberating mission for sociology. If sociology should support civil society against the tyrannies of the market and the state, McLennan suggests, we also need to add, “and against the encroachments of religiosity too” (2007, p. 859). Consequently, we have several nominees here to be defended or to be opposed.

Burawoy, in response, said that he never denied his own Marxist values and clearly stated that while “social science without values is impossible”, we only need to clarify which set of values “makes more sense today” (Burawoy, 2007: p. 320). After that he draws his own point of view on Karl Polany’s study of the rise of classical liberalism, *The Great Transformation* (1944), by separating three waves of sociology

which resonate with three waves of marketization of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Burawoy, 2007: pp. 323-27). The first wave was at the time of Chartism and other trade union movements. The counterpart sociology at that time was 'utopian sociology'. The second wave, accordingly, was in the age of extremes – as Hobsbawm famously called it — with the horrific universal ideological divides. The counterpart sociology of that age was the expansion of policy sociology which in the West was dealing with the question of the emerging welfare state (Burawoy, 2007: p 324). The last wave of marketization has happened in our time, in which, according to Burawoy, state and market have become allies and together colonised civil society. Indeed, in this situation the defence of humanity is intertwined with the defence of civil society against the state and the market (Burawoy, 2007: p. 324).

Be that as it may, a supporter of the idea of 'open dialogue' can argue that all of these interpretations are sociological insights. Namely, the anti-religious perspectives of McLennan, along with the Marxist approach of Burawoy, and also, say, the theistic viewpoint of Fuller and Lipinska (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014), are the equally legitimate candidates. Consequently, the only necessary imperative for that 'open dialogue' would be the acceptance of the legitimacy of the contribution of the other groups in the discussion.

This quotation from Henrik Dahl's chapter on public sociology, as he claims, is the result of his twenty years of being an academic sociologist. Dahl says:

In my personal experience, disagreement is much stronger when pure sociologists are involved in debates with other pure sociologists or with practical sociologists than it is when similar social groups debate. I have personally witnessed levels of aggression I found comparable only to disagreement about schismatic religious differences inside hard-core or esoteric religious communities. (2008: p. 147)

Dahl's conclusion is also interesting. He believes that the only way out of these disputes is an agreement that we cannot criticise a colleague for betraying *our values* (whatever they are); rather we should criticise them because of betraying *their own values* (again, whatever they are) (Dahl, 2008: p. 154). In other words, at the end, the question is only about the *consistency* of one's ideas not the content. Even more than that, Burawoy believes that "If sociology actually supports more liberal or critical public sociologies that is a consequence of the *evolving ethos* of the sociological community" (Burawoy, 2005: pp. 8-9—*ital.* mine). Therefore, we can conclude not only that no standard sociological standpoint exists, but also that what looks like a solid sociological insight is nothing but the *historically constructed ethos of sociologists* which does not contain anything necessarily 'authentic' or manifestly 'reasonable'.

4. Making social movements and co-practice

In his 2004 lecture, Burawoy recalled a trip to South Africa to talk about public sociology. His audiences, he remembered, were looking at him "nonplussed" because they could not imagine what else sociology

could be (Burawoy, 2005: p. 20). That is to say, sociology, for the South Africans, was closely connected to the anti-apartheid movement and served nothing beyond making real changes in real society. So, it was already a public sociology. Burawoy concluded that “while in the United States we were *theorising* social movements; in South Africa sociologists were *making* movements” (Burawoy, 2005: p. 20-1—*ital.* mine). The same is true for many countries in the Global South. It is true that the idea of not only theorising but also making movements to change the real lives of people is at the centre of the public sociology project. But it has been forgotten for the past several decades in the West.

In the previous section, I tried to show that public sociology is the new battlefield of different sociological schools and ideas. In the following sections, I will review some lessons from which we can learn from the experience of public engagement of Islamic religious intellectuals. I will argue that a post-secular public sociology can work as a context in which challenging of neutrality and co-practice can join.

Burawoy distinguishes between *traditional* and *organic* public sociologists (Burawoy, 2005: pp. 7-8). The books of the *traditional* public sociologists, on the one hand, are read beyond the academy and spark public discussions. This category includes Zygmunt Bauman (2000), Richard Sennett (1977) and Hanna Arendt (1958), for instance. The *organic* public sociologists, on the other hand, are those who make public dialogues a process of “mutual education” between different groups (Burawoy, 2005: p. 8). Thus, this mutuality of the relationship is the point which separates *organic* public sociologists from the *traditional* ones. At a

2008 conference in Tehran, I asked Burawoy about the traditional sociologists in (what he calls) the global South. He immediately pointed at the picture of Ali Shariati (1933-1977) on the wall of the conference hall and responded that Shariati was a good example of such public sociologists.

For several reasons, I think that Burawoy is right and Shariati was a good example of a *traditional public sociologist*. Moreover, I will argue that Shariati was a traditional *post-secular* public sociologist. It is noteworthy that Shariati was one of the most politically influential figures in the contemporary history of the Middle East. As Vali Nasr (2006) pointed out, the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran was partly the result of the two intellectual revolutionary interpretations of the Shia religious beliefs: the reinterpretation of Islamic *messianism* by Imam Khomeini⁵⁶ and the reinterpretation of *martyrdom* by Ali Shariati⁵⁷ (Nasr, 2006: p. 130). It is remarkable that Shariati was not a political character in the conventional sense of the term: he was not a member of one of the numerous political parties or teams of revolutionary activists against the *Shah* (king of Iran at the time). Instead, he was a sociologist and lecturer

⁵⁶ According to the Shia beliefs the twelfth Imam (Imam Mahdi) is a hidden leader of the *ummah* and believers should wait for his second coming. Traditionally, waiting for the accomplishment of God's will by the return of Mahdi has been defined in a passive way. That is to say, even if necessary for the safety of the believers, they should conceal their beliefs. But Imam Khomeini, not only a politician but first and foremost a *faqih* (Islamic scholar), redefined the concept of 'waiting' (*entezar*) as the process of active preparation for the return of Mahdi (Nasr, 2006: p. 130; Chatterjee, 2011: pp. 139-141).

⁵⁷ The concept of martyrdom in Shia theology is highly intertwined with the story of the martyr of Karbala (Imam Hussain) who was the grandson of the prophet Muhammad and was killed in an unfair war with the ruler of the time in a land called Karbala in nowadays modern Iraq. Shariati divided between the 'red revolutionary religion' of Imam Hussain which is about making political changes, and the 'black ritualistic religion' of mourning for Imam Hussain --without any political goal of making a real change in society (Shariati, 2014). Thus, he reinterpreted the Karbala event not as a mere historical event but as an exemplar of any revolutionary change in society.

who was educated in France and was in contact with the great intellectual figures of Europe such as Louis Massignon (1883-1962), Georges Gurvitch (1894-1965) and Jacques Berque (1910-1995). In France, he engaged with the anti-colonial movements in Algeria. But the important turning point for him was during the last years of living in Paris when he had come to realise that what he needed was a combination of Marxism, existentialism and Islam. The result of the mixture, he believed, is a modern Islamic progressive and revolutionary ideology which can make real change in society (Rahnema, 2000: p. 128; Shariati, 1971). He was right and his ideology had a great effect on the emerging educated middle class youth who were unsatisfied with the tyranny of the *Shah* but had no alternative except socialism (which was not reconcilable with their traditional religious beliefs) (Abrahamian, 2010: pp. 143-147). Chatterjee describes Shariati's popularity in Iran between 1962 and 1969 in this way:

The appearance of a western-trained professor using the language and jargon of western philosophers and social scientists couched in an Islamic terminology proved a novelty. In his lectures, traditional religious concepts were cast in a new mould that was no longer obscure, prosaic, and stale. (Chatterjee, 2011: p. 78)

Shariati's novel interpretations of the religious stories such as the story of Adam and Eve, Abraham and companions of Muhammad, in addition to his imaginative, creative and poetic rhetoric, had impressed crowds. He was an *avant garde* intellectual celebrity but not for translating pioneering western ideas, which was the common gesture of

many Iranian intellectuals of the time. Quite contrarily, he started from the so-called 'retrogressive' popular religious ideas and texts and reinterpreted them in an entirely new way. Rahnema (2000), in his biography of Shariati wrote about the hostile reaction of the Iranian secular (mostly Marxist) intellectuals to Shariati. One instance was the case of his translation of a treatise on Salman, by Louis Massignon, from French into Farsi⁵⁸. Amir Parviz Puyan (1946-1971), a Marxist political activist, sent a sarcastic message to Shariati saying: "instead of translating (Marx's) *Capital*, is this (Salman) the present you have brought us from Europe?" (Rahnema, 2000: p. 138). Shariati retorted that from now on he will work on *ziyaratnameh-ha* (i.e. the praying texts that Muslim Shia pilgrims read during visits to the holy shrines) (Rahnema, 2000: p. 138). Taking everything into account, Shariati was one of the pioneering figures of a new form of being Muslim in the modern world which became known as *religious intellectualism*, which had only a few precedents in Egypt. His novelty was the progressive modern reinterpretation of religious traditional texts and stories both to *adapt* to modern reality and to *transform* it. The division refers to two types of *reform* according to Tariq Ramadan in his *Radical Reform* (2009): adaptation reform and transformation reform (Ramadan, 2009: p. 33). Adaptation reform, on the one hand, was what Muslim scholars normally used to do during history – "observing the world, noting its changes then coming back to the texts to suggest new readings" (Ramadan, 2009: p. 33). Transformation reform,

⁵⁸ Salman was a companion of Prophet Muhammad who was a Persian, born in a Zoroastrian family, but converted to Christianity and finally became Muslim. The historical figure of Salman who searched around the world for truth was interesting for Massignon (Rahnema, 2000: pp. 130-137).

on the other hand, concerns adding another step – moving again from the religious text to the society and trying to change it. Accordingly, transformation reformers do not accept the given modern context as the unchangeable fate (Ramadan, 2009: p. 33). Shariati, I should add, was a reformer in the second sense of the term.

Arguably, Shariati was neither a Marxist who used Islam for his political goals, nor a Muslim who was enchanted with modern Western philosophies. His goal, in fact, was a synthesis between the two (Shariati, 1971; Rahnema, 2000; Hunter, 2009: pp. 50-6). He went back to the texts with which the ordinary people were familiar: the Quran, sacred texts and religious stories. Accordingly, he saw religion as *praxis*, not as ‘the opium of the people’ as Marx used to think. Let us focus on this aspect of his work by reviewing one of his central texts, *eslamshenasi* (Islamology/ 1971).

Shariati in the first volume of *eslamshenasi* (1971) interpreted two verses of the Quran: (1) “certainly we created man from a dry clay, of black mud fashioned in shape” (Quran, 15:26), (2) “So, when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down making obeisance to him” (Quran, 15:29). Shariati stated that the human being is something between a piece of inferior black mud and an unmatched spirit of God. He adds that neither of these refers to something real in the history of the creation of man. Instead, they are two metaphors to show two possibilities for the human condition (Shariati, 1971: pp. 61-2). Thus, he concludes that in Islam, man is a hybrid entity or a “god-like creature in exile” (Shariati, 1971: p. 73). As mentioned above, this kind of

conception of man is shared between the Abrahamic religions. However, there are still huge theological differences between, say, Christianity and Islam. For example, in Islam God is more transcendental and inaccessible to man, but in Christianity, God is incarnated in the body of a man – Jesus. Yet both religions allow the believers much room for manoeuvre in terms of becoming like God. In Shariati's unorthodox interpretation, we should depart from the Satanic muddy self (*khistan-e lajani*) toward the spiritual divine self (*khistan-e khodayi*) (Shariati, 1971: p. 66). And this is the very essence of an Islamic revolution on an individual scale. In the same vein, Shariati theorised the social and political changes. He did so by reinterpreting the Quranic story of Cain and Abel which for Shariati was 'the Islamic philosophy of history' (Shariati, 1971: p. 74). The fight between two brothers, for him, was the beginning of the eternal battle between the muddy side and the divine side of history. Consequently, Islam as a religion, for Shariati, could not be anything other than a path from the satanic side of the self to the divine side. In another of his books *Niyayesh* (Invocation/ 1970), Shariati wrote: "if religion does not work before death, it certainly will not work after it" (Shariati, 1970: p. 77). Accordingly, he defended the red religion of martyrdom against the black religion of unworthy rituals (Shariati, 2014).

These revolutionary interpretations, which turned into the basis for a revolutionary ideology, resulted the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran. Many historians mentioned Shariati as the most important ideologue of the post-revolutionary government as well (Abrahamian, 2010: pp. 143-

147; Hunter, 2009: p. 50; Nasr, 2006: p. 130). It is unlikely that any other sociologist has since reached this level of popularity and political effectiveness. His rereading of religious ideas not only to *adapt* to the modern world but also to *transform* it makes him the classic figure of the traditional post-secular public sociologist who does not take for granted the rebellion side of Prometheanism. It instead engages with the self-creation side (see chapter three). Following his father he believed that materialists cannot be 'real socialists'. The real socialists are those who believe in monotheism (*towhid*). In a monotheistic point of view, Shariati argued, everything in the world has one origin and one goal. Any duality and dichotomy is a sign of either atheism or infidelity (*kofr*) (Shariati, 1971: p. 59). Thus, he believed that all dichotomies – such as spirit/body, nature/what is beyond nature, science/religion, landlord/peasant, Arab/non-Arab, Persian/non-Persian, capitalist/proletariat, etc. – in the monotheistic point of view are meaningless (Shariati, 1971: pp. 58-9).

He tried to expropriate the secularist Westernised intellectuals' paradigm and, one might say, tried to occupy their concepts which were a successful project in the Middle East. In a religious context such as in the Middle East, the revolutionary reformation in religion and redefining it as praxis, I believe, was one of the crucial causes of his success. Finally, Shariati's main idea was to challenge the 'sacred thus apolitical' definition of religion. In contrast, religion should be 'sacred' and political in terms of being devoted to the transformation of people's worldly life.

5. Authenticity of struggle

Shariati adopted a position shared by right wing intellectual Sloterdijk, left wing thinkers Žižek and Badiou, pragmatism and, indeed, the Abrahamic religions; that is the centrality of remaking society through co-practice. Let us begin with the last one; Abrahamic religions. In a famous part of the bible, Jesus gave an unusual definition of love: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes even his own life—he cannot be my disciple” (Luke14:26)? As Žižek interpreted it:

Family relations stand here for any particular ethnic or hierarchical social bond that determines our place in the global Order of Things. The “hatred” enjoined by Christ is therefore not the opposite of Christian love, but its direct expression: it is love itself that enjoins us to dissociate ourselves from the organic community into which we were born. (Žižek, 2012: p. 44)

Žižek used this biblical insight to make a point about tolerance in the multi-cultural societies of Europe. He argued that the conflicts over multiculturalism are not about the contrast between pluralities of cultures. They, instead, are about *Leitkultur* (dominant culture). How do they want to co-exist? What do they have to share? Žižek rejects the ‘liberal game of tolerance’. Questions such as; do we need to tolerate them banning their women to drive? Do we need to tolerate them praying in public? These questions, Žižek believes, are distracting us from the most needed solution which is ironically a struggle. “The only way to break out of the deadlock is to propose and fight” for a positive project (Žižek, 2012: p.

46). So, for him, going beyond tolerance is only possible when all sides begin *to co-practice in a fight and struggle*. There are two noteworthy points regarding the necessity of struggle: firstly, during the struggle all the differences between man, woman, Jews, Muslims, and origins etc. are disappearing because all of the members of the society share one thing which is the battleground. Secondly, today 's dividing lines were also the result of the earlier struggles. The most important function of co-practice would be to generate those shared memories of common achievements that will serve as a ground for a sense of solidarity among the members of a given community. Badiou is sharing this view with Žižek:

Rather than tasking ethics with the job of respecting difference by practising tolerance, Badiou begins with the assumption, as does Deleuze, that difference is the natural state of the world. Difference constitutes the banal conditions of life. As such, difference in and of itself is not particularly interesting. Of much greater interest is the difficult and ethically challenging task of *recognizing the Same* (i.e. that which is not yet, that which will become indifferent to difference, which for Deleuze entails the eternal return of difference). (Hawes, 2015: p. 84—*ital.* Original)

The difference and contradiction, therefore, is all that we can say about the 'normal' state of the world. Difference in itself, thus, is not the

main concern. The important point is a form of practice to 'recognise' and more accurately to *construct the sameness*. Here is an ontological schism. Assuming sameness as a normal state of the world would result in the prescription of tolerating differences. It also leads to the assumption of neutrality. That is to say, it has been suggested that when there are a variety of cracks in the society, the best thing to do is to presuppose a neutral sphere in which everybody can be represented. So neutrality and tolerance are two sides of one coin. Outside of the neutral sphere (political sphere, scientific disciplines, etc.) one will experience all the divisions and cracks in society, but one should remain tolerant. While, inside the neutral sphere everyone is equally represented and decisions are made according to the benefit of the public.

Žižek and Badiou, alternatively, argue that the point is not the formerly constituted differences and identities. The point is to make a new set of collective memories which will serve as a basis for remaking a *Leitkultur*, not mere absorbing and including of the others into the existing dominant culture (Žižek, 2012). Here again Žižek who, in Beckford's typology, was categorised under the last title of the sceptics of post-secularism can be seen as a post-secularist in the fourth sense of the term i.e. the negative questioning of neutrality which is joined with the positive prescription of co-practice.

Shariati also tried to re-read the history of Abrahamic religions to attach religion with revolutionary co-practice by considering the former social ties (i.e. nationality, family etc.) as battlegrounds. In the same vein, he interpreted the role of religion in the context of the ontological authenticity

of differences and struggles. So he distinguished 'revolutionary religion', which destroys and rebuilds, from the religion of pre-determination and fate (Shariati, 1988: p. 31-2). The original and real dichotomy for him was not religion versus irreligion. It rather was the dichotomy of 'the religion of justification of the existing situation' against 'the revolutionary religion of re-making and re-creation of society' (Shariati, 1988: p. 31). One of the sources of Shariati's authoritative appearance in the Iranian public sphere was channelling all the dissatisfactions and diversities toward a shared battleground of will to re-make the self through re-making, re-arranging and re-assembling society. So, he only technically gave the priority to co-practice and at a particular time but also attributed the authenticity to struggle. So for Shariati, if one wants to be a good believer at any moment he or she needs to find the right field of struggle. Therefore, the main questions of a believer would be; are you struggling or not? Your struggle is against/for *what* (e.g. discrimination, racism, certain social rights, etc.)? In other words, did you choose your 'true struggle' or are you are fighting in the 'wrong battlefield'? All in all, a post-neutrality and post-secular public sociology is intriguing and inviting such questions as the subject of negotiations in the public sphere not a mere discussion about passive co-existence, cultural absorption of the minorities and tolerance of the others. It seems that Burwoy also makes the same point. The only inconsistent part of his thesis, from this perspective, is the insistence on a certain battlefield which, for him, is 'defending humanity and civil society' against the tyranny of the market. Instead, I suggest that public sociology can work as a *frame* of debate about the priority of each

battlefield. Otherwise, it can be easily turned into a target for the criticism of those who do not share the interest in Burawoy's preferred struggle.

6. Conclusion

To the extent that sociologists are willing to challenge the subtraction stories and the underlying assumed neutrality, they will make a free space for creativity which is the result of practice. In this chapter, I have argued that we can consistently define post-secularism as a form of challenging the conception of *the secular as the neutral*. This critical process, is not in any way, a return to the pre-modern or pre-secular. Indeed, and by contrast, it is a progressive movement of building on former achievements and, at the same time, it goes beyond the formerly fabricated borders. If there is no neutrality, a post-secular public sociology would develop around the ideal of the authenticity of struggle. Struggles from this point of view are a way of co-practice and making new identities based on the new shared collective memories of individuals who have diverging interests in society.

Conclusion

Below, I will conclude the thesis in four sections. In the first section, I will summarise the major claims and insights of the thesis. The second section is dedicated to one of the main theoretical theme of the thesis: criticising the *modernity versus religion* dichotomy. The third section is about the future of both pilgrim and tourist atheisms. Finally, the last section puts forward some ideas about further studies which can be conducted as a result of my thesis.

1. A précis of the entire argument of the thesis

During the Enlightenment Goethe's Prometheus drama fragment was associated with a series of debates about pantheism. He occasionally mentioned his sympathy with the old mysterious character of Prometheus in terms of having a poetic inspiration which "he thought was his 'very own possession'" (Nicholls, 2015: p. 164). Thus, he rewrote the drama, re-created the mythical character and amended the story to fit into the discussions of his time. Goethe, who defined himself as an aesthetic polytheist, used to believe that having a poetic inspiration and being a writer in a Christian culture "meant to be a god in opposition to God" (Nicholls, 2015: p. 165—*ital.* Original). God of Christianity is creating

through the word. Thus man is godlike to the extent that he possesses the poetic power of creation.

One can define God's creative power in non-linguistic ways as well. Mimicking God can mean seeing the future as a dynamic horizon of new possibilities; that is a future that can be shaped by our powers. Does this mean that we know everything from the outset? Or is there any *a priori* knowledge which will let us be sure about the consequences of our actions? It does not seem that empirical science, philosophy or religion, are able to prepare us with those principles. The plurality of their truth-claims, paradoxically, is strong evidence of their failure to do so.

A pragmatist argument, with which I am sympathetic, would be that we learn from our previous actions and experiences. This does not mean that we will learn a set of universally valid principles that will act as guide to future experiments; hence we are not able to accumulate our knowledge to make further progress in the conditions of our existence. Instead, the result of our former experiences would be some hints about our future actions.

Take the case of modern world crises such as global warming, that is, climate change and air pollution which are human-made and the results of our former actions. These are unprecedented crises because modern man's incomparable power over the manipulation of nature is unprecedented in human history. Some of the forerunners of science and technology were worried about the unintended consequences of 'playing God'. But in general there was not enough knowledge of the extent of the

disastrous results to come. Still, as a result of experiencing these crises we cannot claim that we have discovered some new laws that will direct our future actions to a safer path. We can only claim that we have gained some ideas about handling climate change; for example, to appeal for bold international co-operation, the reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases, and investing in renewable energy sources. These are nothing but a few policies to cope with the existing crises. So, what else do we learn from the crises?

However these crises always seem to fail to teach us some truths about the world, they are nevertheless, wake-up calls for us to be trained and to prepare ourselves for more crises to come. Sloterdijk's Nietzschean invitation is to co-train, co-practice and co-work in the face of crisis (Sloterdijk, 2013). The resolution cannot be found in some objective knowledge but in trained and empowered individuals and crowds who are ready to deal with what Blumenberg called the 'absolutism of reality' which is the bitterness that we feel when we cannot control the conditions of our existence (Blumenberg, 1985: p. 3-16). Therefore, crises are calls for training.

Unger seeks to radicalise this demand by encouraging experimentalism. Accordingly, while we can neither gain some sort of universal truth, and nor are we protected from the crises, there is still the option open to us of more experiments and more practices (Unger, 2007). We should keep playing God, by 'capturing the imagination of alternative'. The idea of letting the images of the future change the present is the core of Unger's suggestion. From this point of view, not only should we be

prepared for crises but we should also actively try new ways of expanding our powers.

All these approaches fall into the category of Promethean self-creation. That is to say, Prometheanism is not only about the rejection of transcendence but it is also about mimicking transcendence through imagining new futures.

In the first part of the thesis, I argued about the historical roots of Prometheanism in the nominalist theology of the late middle ages. In the last part, however, I have argued for the re-writing of Promethanism and that we should use its second aspect (self-creation) for our post-secular age. Post-secularism in this sense refers to consciousness about the historical formation of *the secular as the neutral* and also hesitation about its possibility. The idea is that the second aspect of Prometheanism will let us co-practice without assuming any shared truth-claim. New possibilities emerge out of this co-practice. Pragmatists who try to re-write Prometheanism for our age are doing what Goethe did in his own time; attempting to reorder and re-arrange the old and familiar stories so as to fit them into the current age.

Challenging the *faith versus reason* dichotomy more than being an entertaining intellectual game is a politically necessary action. During the last two centuries, the dichotomy, with all of its variants such as 'religion versus science', 'the sacred versus the secular' and 'church versus state', was the cornerstone of both religious and secular violent ideologies. The ideological followers of each side of the dichotomy, by making

stereotypical and simplistic conceptions of both faith and reason, have demonised the followers of the other side. First, religious fundamentalist movements presuppose the inherent secularity of scientific theories. Thus, they look at those theories with suspicion. The recent tragicomic example of these suspicious views is the case of Catherine and Herbert Schaible, the American Pentecostalist parents who believe in faith-healing. They refused any sort of modern medicine for their family's physical illnesses because they believed that the Son of God shed blood to heal humankind and no modern medicine that is made by human reason can replace it. No wonder that this dogma caused the death of two of their young children from an illness which could have been cured with a few pills (Dockterman, 2014). Second, the New Atheists, for instance, demonise the followers of the religion side of the dichotomy by attributing ignorance and violence to all of the believers. For instance, Dawkins in August 2013 made a controversial comment on his Twitter account. He wrote: "All the world's Muslims have fewer Nobel Prizes than Trinity College, Cambridge." Many activists criticised this Islamophobic assertion. One blogger humorously retorted: "Trinity Cambridge has presumably also produced more Soviet-supporting traitors to the UK than Islam." In defence Dawkins responded that what he said was just an 'intriguing fact' (Meikle, 2013). To show the Dawkins fallacy, one can simply rewrite that 'fact' by replacing Muslims with Chinese people. While there are more than one billion Chinese people on earth, few of them (in comparison with scholars at the University of Cambridge) have received a Nobel Prize. Can we attribute their scientific failure to their nationality,

race or religious beliefs? We apparently consider the second assertion fallacious, racist and heinous. In fact, the lack of scientific progress in each community is related to many historical, economic and social factors which cannot be reduced merely to the official religion of that community. The New Atheists by such simplistic assertions only inflame anti-Muslim sentiment in the West, which nowadays resonates with the anti-immigration policies of the governments after the Great Recession.

One way of approaching the increasing tension between the two sides of the faith/reason dichotomy is to choose a politically pacifistic position which promotes pluralism, mutual tolerance and peace among both sides. But the more drastic and intellectually challenging practice, which I have chosen in this thesis, is to show the historical and theoretical misreadings which triggered those simplistic interpretations on both sides of the dichotomy.

Arguing that reason and faith could not be and have never actually been completely separated from each other, this thesis adopted the strategy of unearthing and revealing the 'epistemological unconscious' – Matthew Engelke's helpful term – of modern atheisms. It has been illustrated that the myth of warfare between science and religion is a foundational myth for the New Atheists, as today's most famous representatives of pilgrim atheism. The New Atheists heavily rely on Darwinism to reject religion which they consider to be nothing more than 'superstition'. But their very epistemological notions of science as an objective knowledge, the scientist as the person who attains that God-like knowledge, and technology which manipulates and controls nature, are

dependent on the late Middle Ages Christian conception of man as a cognitively privileged animal who has been created in the image of God. This epistemological unconscious is not only historically important but also essential for modern day science and technology. As argued in part two of the thesis, the neo-Darwinian conception of humankind – as yet another animal species which might become extinct like its other counterpart species – cannot form an appropriate background ideology for science. This is because scientific progress needs human beings who can take enormous risks, which in itself depends on a notion of man who is not limited to the animal side of its being. But the New Atheists through the myth of warfare constructed a historical narrative which is based on the idea of the *radical break* between theology and modernity. They believe that modernity was an ‘absolute beginning’ – as Hans Blumenberg called it – of a new type of human being who is aware of his animality. For New Atheists, that was an end-point to all the delusions and the irrational beliefs concerning our God-like nature. I demonstrated that this theory was founded on a misreading of the history of science. I also argued that theology remained alive in disguise.

The *radical break* idea of the New Atheists stands against the tourist atheists’ *continuity* conception of the relationship between theology and modernity. Tourist atheists’ idea of using religious sentiment, insight and wisdom for an atheistic blissful life is founded on their implicit rejection of the *reason versus faith* dichotomy. They go beyond that dichotomy without demonising the religious believers and quite contrarily attribute some wisdom to religion. Their clever strategy is actively to claim

those wisdoms and occupy the religious concepts, ideas and even rituals. In other words, tourist atheists would argue that if religions are not true, they have never been true. So, why do we need to bother showing their falsity? Conversely, atheists need to see religions as games which were started by our ancestors. There were reasons for making such games and there is no good evidence which shows that we will benefit from the total abandonment of those games. I showed that the touristic strategy, which might change the face of atheism in the following decades, is founded on still another interpretation of the Christian *imago dei* doctrine which defines man as a God-like creature, not in objective knowledge, but in its very subjective individuality. Thus, the tourist is an individual who quests not for control over nature, but for self-fulfilment. For this goal, tourists do not recognise any sacred territory which cannot be occupied – even the territories of religions.

Moreover, it is reasonable to say that the occupation and reoccupation of past paradigms has always been a successful way of making revolutionary changes in history. For instance, the first Christians of the beginning of the Middle Ages occupied pagan concepts, ideas and rituals. The act of occupation showed itself specifically in the works of Saint Augustine regarding the Hellenistic question of the idea of the old cosmos (Blumenberg, 1983: pp. 131-133). Furthermore, the Muslim philosophers of the ninth and tenth centuries did the same thing with the Ancient Greek philosophies which were translated into Arabic. They occupied and redefined the pagan Greek philosophical heritage to build their own theistic philosophies. For instance, Ibn-Sina redefined the

Aristotelian idea of an unmoved mover (*primum movens*) in a totally new way and turned it into an argument for the existence of the unique God of Islam (Goodman, 1992: p. 75). His project was successful to the point that his Christian counterparts such as Aquinas and Scotus, a few centuries after Ibn-Sina, used his argument for the existence of God as the basis of their own theistic philosophical approaches (Aquinas, 1975). We can even say that the Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages occupied those particular concepts and arguments. Likewise, it was claimed that scholasticism *per se* was a movement in Christendom designed for the occupation of both Greek and Islamic philosophical heritages (MacCulloch, 2009: pp. 396-415). Finally, I have illustrated that the pioneering figures of both the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution also occupied Christian concepts and ideas. This is the lesson that we can learn from a generation of scholars: Carl Schmitt (1985), Karl Löwith (1949), Amos Funkenstein (1986), John Milbank (2006), Michael Allen Gillespie (2008) and Steve Fuller (2011). My work also contributes to this literature.

2. Models of relationships between religion and modernity

I started this thesis with the goal of challenging the platitude in sociology textbooks that religion is opposed to modernity. To conclude the discussions regarding that platitude I need to suggest a new typology of models of seeing the relationship between religion and modernity. All in all, we can recognise three general models, two of which are well known to researchers in the field of sociology of modernity and another which is increasingly gaining attention from scholars. The first conception is what I

called the *radical break* conception which has many followers among religious and secular ideologists. It also had many supporters among sociologists until recently – especially among the leftist-Marxist traditions of social theory. The other conception is what I called the idea of the *continuity* between religion and modernity which has more followers among scholars in the fields of science studies and theology. Yet another conception of the religion/modernity relationship which is still popular among sociologists is the Weberian sociological point of view in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). The Weberian conception is halfway between the two former conceptions and I call it the *connectivity* conception. Weber observed that we live a shallow, everyday life because money and economic acquisition have turned into an end in themselves (Weber, 2001: p. 18), restless activity without seeking any meaning to underpin it has become prevalent (Weber, 2001: p. 32), and man now exists for the sake of business not *vice versa* (Weber, 2001: p. 32). As Weber famously suggested, these malaise are the results of the capitalistic ethos – systematic, methodic and regular work which is not limited to any time or place (Weber, 2001: p. 107). Furthermore, the capitalistic ethos is the unintended result of the Calvinistic mode of approaching the world. Specifically, the idea of work-in-calling (*Beruf*), Weber believed, played a central role. That idea means that one can overcome the existential anxiety about his own state of salvation by working methodically to achieve worldly success which is itself the sign of God's grace (Weber, 2001). Thus, Weber could see some sociological connections between those theological roots and the final outcome of the

process which is the rationalisation of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*). Yet still he failed to answer one question about the fate of religion in the modern world; Weber believed that the religious roots of the capitalistic ethos “died out slowly” and gave way to the “utilitarian worldliness” (Weber, 2001: p. 119). But he did not seem to care about answering the following question: did the religious roots of modernity *disappear* or *dissolve* into modernity? Nevertheless, the *continuity* conception of the relationship between religion and modernity shows us that those roots have never vanished. There are not only historical connections between the modern and the pre-modern but the pre-modern continually shapes the modern – it is more precise to say that they are interwoven with each other. Indeed, the *continuity* conception completes the Weberian line of the argument. No wonder that Löwith, one of the founders of the *continuity* conception, was Weber’s student in Germany; later, Löwith wrote a famous textbook about his teacher (see: Löwith, 1993).

To conclude, the *continuity* conception of the relationship between religion and modernity does not start from the ideological notion of a ‘conjectural leap’ from the Middle Ages to a secular age, and it goes further than discerning *some* historical-sociological connections between the two. Instead, it presupposes that religion and modernity are historically and structurally interwoven with each other. Such a conception gives rise to a number of sociological questions about the enduring theological structures in today’s society and how we can contribute to their dynamism in the future. Thus, I believe that the *continuity* conception is more sociologically intriguing in character.

Moreover, we must hesitate about the analytical productivity of both the absolute rejection of the role of religion in modern times (the radical break conception) and the partial acceptance of its role (the connectivity conception); rather, the continuity conception of the relationship between the past and the present is more academically insightful for researchers in the field of the sociology of modernity.

3. The Future of Atheism

Another subject that I need to address is the future of modern atheisms. After de Botton declared his plan to establish an atheist temple in London, the idea was picked up by a comedic duo, Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans. They held their first atheist Sunday gathering in an old abandoned Church in Bath in January 2013 with a few attendants. After a while it went viral and now there are 28 of these assemblies in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. On their website, Jones and Evans estimate that there will be 100 such assemblies around the world by the end of 2014 (Jones and Evans, 2014). The idea is to provide a gathering for atheists in a church-like building to listen to entertaining music, to sing together, to hear short lectures about happiness in life, and probably to engage in a few minutes of relaxation. So, in this way they try to mimic the Christian Sunday services but without any type of organised system of belief. We might wonder if this is a serious, growing movement or just a transient bourgeois pastime. I think the second idea is more probable because it does not seem that there can be a unique function for such atheist temples which is not already covered by other secular institutions such as universities, NGOs, museums and art centres.

Nevertheless, tourist atheism has a lot more to accomplish than these fancy social gatherings in the near future. The most significant thing that these gatherings can do is to make an intellectual movement of rethinking religion which is not exclusive to the academic ivory towers and engages with society. The most famous tourist atheists are also popular figures such as de Botton or 'philosopher-celebrities' such as Žižek who are capable of drawing public attention to issues regarding religion in today's society. Their interpretation of religion is a lot more complex than that of their fellow New Atheists and more diverse in terms of approving and rejecting different items in the 'buffet of religion'. Thus, their method of approaching religious faiths helps religion to remain one of the most vibrant topics in public debate. Their creative ways of approaching religion might be more interesting to the younger generations in comparison to the militant atheism of the New Atheists. Therefore, it is highly likely that the tourist atheists will be the new representatives of modern atheism in a few years.

However, New Atheism still has a commanding lead in the modern atheistic discourses. Disregarding the validity of their arguments, they have – in my terms – occupied the science and technology discourse. And we know that science and technology will remain relevant for a long, unknown future. Thus, until they rely on science and technology to legitimise their own intellectual positions, they will remain more or less socially attractive to many audiences. The only alternative can be another movement which can reoccupy their scientific rhetoric. Here the idea of *reclaiming reason* comes on the scene, about which I wrote in the last

chapter. A post-secular movement can reclaim science, technology and human reason, which is the motor-engine of both by referring to the relevance of religious structures which are still shaping modern science.

4. Future research

As a result of my study, further studies might well be conducted, first about the *sociology of atheism*, which is a new project in the field of religious studies (LeDrew, 2013), and second about the theological roots of modernity.

1. For a long time many sociologists defined atheism negatively as the lack of belief in religion. Thus, studies on atheism were included in the field of the sociology of religion. I believe that this is totally misleading. In fact, atheism is not a 'non-belief'; rather, it is a combination of not-religious, anti-religious and sometimes scientific or humanist beliefs (which as I have shown are unconsciously utilising theological structures). That is to say, since atheist doctrines state something positive about the world, they unavoidably turn into belief systems. People make their own identities (along with social organisations) around the principles of those atheistic systems of belief. So we need to consider atheism as a unique sociological phenomenon, different aspects of which needs to be studied, such as its relationship with religion, its public presence and its organisations.

Stephen LeDrew (2012 and 2013) started the project on the *sociology of atheism* but the main problem with his work is the incompetent and old typology of scientific versus humanist atheisms. The

point is that no atheist figure can completely be placed into one of these categories – neither historical figures such as Feuerbach nor today's figures such as Sloterdijk. To solve this problem, I chose a more abstract level to divide between the different types of atheisms. As I illustrated in chapter two of the thesis, the *pilgrim atheism versus tourist atheism* typology is founded on the atheist's recognition of the rigidity of the division between true and false. While pilgrim atheists believe in a clear border between true (e.g. science) and false (e.g. religion), tourist atheists deconstruct those dichotomies. Concomitantly, while pilgrim atheists are concerned with objective knowledge, tourist atheists focus on subjective fulfilment. This division is an up-to-date typology which can become the basis for further studies on atheism. Undoubtedly, a more detailed typology which considers the subdivisions of these two types will be helpful. For instance, I put both scientific and humanist atheisms under the category of pilgrim atheism, but still one can place many figures alongside Dawkins in the subcategory of scientific atheism who are not biologists so do not talk about Darwinism that much (e.g. Stephen Hawking). Detailed subcategories of the typology will help us gain a clearer map of today's atheisms.

2. Moreover, the deeper insight of this research is that we can unearth the theological foundations of the very modern phenomenon that claims inherent, absolute secularity. Thus, this thesis can also be seen as an invitation to further historical-sociological studies about the theological roots of modernity. In the past five decades, the most insightful studies in this field have been about the constitutive role of the Middle Ages

nominalist movement regarding modernity. Recently, an increasing number of studies have been completed concerning the central figure of nominalism, John Duns Scotus (cf. Williams, 2003). One point that I think is both relevant to the sociology of atheism and also to general sociological studies is about the nominalist foundations of individualism. Hitherto many sociologists have written about the Protestant roots of individualism, but these theories are more sensible in the context of the connections between Protestantism and nominalist figures of the fourteenth century. Sociologists thus need to complete the Weberian project by changing the focus of their researches from, say, Luther and Calvin to their teachers, Ockham and Scotus. These nominalist figures for the first time put human beings and God on one and the same spectrum and attributed God-like powers to human beings. Accordingly, they have contributed to the constitution of the modern individual who is a self-sufficient sovereign like God. This line of argument can be followed in other studies about the theological foundations of modern subjectivity and individualism.

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